

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY

310. Mr W.J. McNEE to the Premier:

I refer to the national action plan on salinity and water quality and the promise of more than \$150 million of federal government funds to tackle salinity in Western Australia over seven years.

- (1) Given that it has been six months since the Premier and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage made much ado about signing up to the national action plan, when does the Premier expect the bilateral agreement with the federal Government to be signed - a step that is necessary to ensure that the national action plan funds become available to Western Australia?
- (2) Why is the State Government committing only \$12 million per annum over five years to this critical environmental problem and not the \$22 million a year that is needed to secure full federal funding?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for some notice of the question. Negotiations on the bilateral agreement are nearing conclusion, subject to resolution of outstanding issues pertaining to matching funding arrangements.

Several members interjected.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I am trying to give a considered answer to the Parliament.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: No, you are not. It is just rhetoric.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: On 19 August 2002, I wrote to the Prime Minister seeking a response to these issues. My office received the Prime Minister's response this week. The Prime Minister's response and other matters concerning finalisation of the funding arrangements are the subject of Cabinet consideration and will be made public in the near future.