

WATER — RESOURCES INVENTORY

386. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Water:

I understand that the Liberal–National government recently released an inventory of water resources in Western Australia. Can the minister please provide some detail on this document and how it can be used to support growth in Western Australia?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I thank the member for the question. Members will understand that the Department of Water is responsible for the management, measurement and assessment of the state’s water resources. When I became the Minister for Water, I was struck by the amount of information that we have within the department on scientific modelling and assessments from the people who work there. They are working through a program to make that more available to the community. One of the things that we have started to work through is how we can make that information accessible for the community, potential investors and other government agencies. A comprehensive understanding of the location and accessibility of the state’s known water resources is very important to the state’s development. Last month the Premier and I launched “Water for Growth”, which brings together the state government’s latest water investigation and planning supply information into one document.

“Water for Growth” contains information on our state’s water resources across all regions, including investigation programs and our planning supplies, and it essentially provides a signpost to the information within the department that it is trying to make available through the new information technology portal. The document is backed up by a more technical document—the “Water resources inventory 2014”—that makes the information publicly available in a more useful way for people seeking to make investment decisions on which they require water information. The inventory contains valuable information for potential investors, different levels and tiers of government and the community, all of whom wish to know the quality, quantity and location of the water we have. These two documents include details on water allocations, water availability and the quality of the water, and they are evidence of the quite substantial bucket of knowledge within this department and its predecessors over the previous 40 years. I am delighted to table these two documents; they demonstrate that this Liberal–National government very much understands that water is an enabler for almost every economic activity in the state. This government understands that investment decisions are reliant on the information held in state government departments, and that is why it has invested and continues to invest in increasing the amount of knowledge it has about our water resources. Western Australia has extensive groundwater resources, and the government is investing, through royalties for regions, to expand that knowledge in areas that have not been investigated previously.

[See papers 1693 and 1694.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Six areas are being investigated as part of a \$25 million program that is being funded by royalties for regions, and one of those is in the member for Moore’s electorate in the west Midlands; plus \$4.5 million is being used for groundwater investigation in the north Gingin area. This is one of the largest groundwater investigations in Western Australia since the 1970s, with an extensive number of bores to be constructed, and the data will be used to calculate how much groundwater is available in the area and how much can be used. It has also assisted us with recent weekend announcements in Albany and Esperance, and has helped us better focus on where to put down bores to ensure town water supplies well into the future. The investigation is assisting the government and the Water Corporation to make better management decisions. I am very happy to provide that information to Parliament and the community.