

CLIMATE CHANGE — WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

255. Ms E.J. KELSBIE to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to responding to the impact that climate change is having on drinking water supplies across regional Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's investment in securing drinking water supplies in regional communities such as Merredin?
- (2) Can the minister outline how this investment, including the investment in a new water storage tank in Merredin, is creating local jobs and supporting local businesses?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question and for her fierce advocacy for regional WA. Members, the impact of climate change on water supplies across Western Australia is well known, particularly with declining rainfall in the south west. What is not often known is that in the north it is not so much declining rainfall but the regularity of rainfall becoming less reliable.

As a government, we understand that climate change is real and we are committed to supporting regional WA. Since 2017, \$589 million has been spent by this government on water infrastructure in regional WA, very significant, across the Water Corporation, Aqwest and Busselton Water. In our last budget, we announced that over the next four years, \$968 million will be spent by this government on water infrastructure in regional WA. That will not only secure water supplies but also create jobs. The member mentioned in particular a project that we are constructing now—a new water tank in Merredin costing \$24 million. When completed, it will be the largest concrete water storage tank in regional WA—42 million litres. That might not excite people, but I am reliably informed that we could fit 24 of these tanks inside Optus Stadium. That would fill it up to the top. That is an interesting fun fact for you. It has enough concrete in it to attract the attention of the Minister for Transport. We know her interest in concrete! Members, it is a bloody big tank. It will hold 42 million litres of water. It will create 80 jobs, 15 of them in the local area. It will secure the water supply for the people of not only Merredin but also many of the towns nearby.

Members, on this side of the chamber, we are spending a lot of money in regional WA. All these projects to date are funded by the state government. We have received no support for these projects from the federal government. Since 2007, the federal government has spent about \$15 billion on water infrastructure. Only two per cent of it has come to Western Australia. Members opposite in the corner could do well to advocate to the federal Liberal–National government that a fair share of water infrastructure money should come to Western Australia. We consulted with regional WA. We have put in an application to the National Water Grid Authority for a \$7.3 million project to renovate or expand 70 agricultural dams across regional WA to provide non-potable water for farmers when their own farm supplies run dry. That is a \$7.3 million project for 70 dams to be upgraded. We have put in 50 per cent of that funding. We asked the feds to put in the rest through the National Water Grid Authority. In the last federal budget, that application was declined. The feds have kicked that application down the road to the next round of funding. While we as a state government are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on regional water infrastructure, the federal Liberal–National government is still ignoring Western Australia. We are getting on and doing the job. We would urge members in the corner to speak to their federal counterparts and get some federal funding for regional water projects in WA.