

DRY START TO 2006

**373. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Water Resources:**

Can the minister please inform the house about the incredibly dry start to 2006?

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:**

The taps opposite are dripping already, and we want to make sure that we do not waste water.

There is concern over the second-driest autumn on record, followed by no rainfall at all in the first half of June, the first month of winter. Certainly, it is pleasing that there has been a little rain in the past 24 hours. I was very surprised that, just three months ago, the member for Kalgoorlie, as the then Leader of the Opposition, was reported in *The West Australian* on 8 March as saying that we should look to do away with the current water restrictions. The restrictions are reviewed from year to year. However, the statement by the opposition member clearly points out that simply going out on a news day, when members might be able to get an idea up, and saying things that do not match the reality simply puts them in a situation in which they do not make sense, as the member for Kalgoorlie did on that day. The fact is that we are very concerned about the lack of rainfall so far this year. However, that concern is tempered by the fact that because of our Security through Diversity program, we are well prepared with a whole range of new sources that we have brought on, including the desalination plant that is due to come on line before the end of the year. Even though we are certainly concerned about the low rainfall, there is no prospect that we will have a total sprinkler ban in the forthcoming summer at the end of the year. That is not the case, as we know, in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane, which have total sprinkler bans, and bans on people using their hoses even to wash their cars. We are much better off than most of the other capital cities. However, we will certainly look to review our water situation at the end of each winter, and it may be that we will make adjustments. Nevertheless, currently the concern is matched by the fact that we have made the hard decisions on a range of matters and put in place the water saving devices, the new sources and the water trading. With those and the new desalination plant, we believe we are well placed to meet the challenge that is confronting us.