

DEPARTMENT OF WATER — RURAL WATER SUPPLY

Statement by Minister for Water

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [9.03 am]: I would like to update the house on the rural water planning program. As members would know, the Liberal–National government has a strong focus on regional development, and development is not possible without secure water supplies. The rural water planning section of the Department of Water has a number of programs to help rural communities and residents better utilise the water available to them. The farm water supply planning scheme, the farm water rebate scheme and the community water supply program are all designed to optimise the use of available non-potable water supplies in dryland agricultural areas of the state, which are areas that receive less than 600 millimetres of rainfall annually.

Two weeks ago I travelled to Hyden in the electorate of Central Wheatbelt and saw for myself the way in which the community water supply program is helping communities to get the most out of underutilised water infrastructure. The program provides up to \$100 000 to local government and community groups to develop emergency farmland and community water supplies, and adds to local funds to deliver their water supply needs. Rainfall patterns are changing in Western Australia. Helping communities build or upgrade infrastructure to capture and store this water, which can then be used throughout the year, means that communities can make the best use of the water available to them. In Hyden, the shire received a grant to install a pump at a small dam at the CBH site. This allows the water to be pumped from the small dam to a larger storage dam, freeing up space in the smaller dam to refill in the event of rain and helping to eliminate water loss through evaporation. This dam will provide an important source of water for farmers and firefighters, and for watering the local oval.

In Kondinin, a 7 000-kilolitre shire dam just east of the town has been re-sealed and upgraded. Work has also been done to improve the catchment run-off area and a pipe built to take the water from the dam four kilometres into Kondinin. This dam filled during recent rains, providing a substantial boost to the shire's water supplies. A relatively small investment by the state and local governments has reinvigorated a previously wasted resource and is supporting water security for this community. In Bolgart, in the electorate of the member for Moore, the local shire is pumping water from a local soak to three large storage tanks where it can be used to meet emergency farmland water needs and to irrigate open space. This forms part of the Shire of Victoria Plains' strategy to drought-proof the shire through water efficiency and better use of non-drinking water supplies.

These projects are all supported by technical advice from the Department of Water, which supports communities to come up with innovative solutions to their water needs and to help make better use of existing infrastructure. An amount of \$5.96 million has been allocated to the rural water planning program over the next two years. I encourage all dryland agricultural shires to visit the website of the Department of Water for further information. Rural communities, especially in agriculture areas, are very dependent on rainfall for their water supplies. Steps taken to support innovative water supply projects will continue to be supported by the state government.