

ON-FARM EMERGENCY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE REBATE SCHEME

**414. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Water:**

I refer to the oversubscription of the national On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme in Western Australia, which is funded by the federal government.

- (1) What is the total value of funding administered by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to Western Australian applicants since this scheme's implementation in 2019?
- (2) Given many farmers have received letters advising the scheme is fully allocated, what further measures will the state government offer farmers preparing for future drought and dry conditions?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. As the member rightly pointed out, that particular on-farm subsidy that is provided is federally funded. That scheme is currently oversubscribed. We have had more farmers put in applications than the federal government has made funds available for. I do not have the exact amount of funding provided available to me. I will check after question time and tell the member; it is not a secret. When it became apparent that that fund was going to be oversubscribed, I wrote to the federal minister at the time—I think it was David Littleproud, although I think the portfolio has now changed—to ask for some additional funding, as I know a number of other states have also done. To date, the federal government has indicated that it will make no more funds available. I find that particularly disappointing, because the federal government has shown a propensity for providing significant funds to the eastern states. As the member would be aware, his federal National Party colleagues have provided billions of dollars of funding, mainly to the Murray–Darling scheme. About two per cent of national water funding has come to Western Australia. Along with the Minister for Agriculture and Food, I have been making the case to the federal government for additional funds for WA.

I have to say that, despite members of the Nationals WA talking big on water issues in WA, their federal colleagues have provided precious little to WA. The state government has funded, and is continuing to fund, additional community water supply projects, primarily in the wheatbelt and the great southern. To date, while we have been in government, we have funded an additional 37 community water projects. That is total funding of, I think, about \$1.5 million. That is a mixture of revamped bores and renovated old Water Corporation infrastructure—decommissioned dams and the like—to make those sources available to farmers who need a non-potable water supply. Those 37 projects and \$1.5 million in funding in our three years dwarfs what the previous Liberal–National government did in that area in eight years. I think members opposite spent about \$750 000 in eight years. We have spent \$1.5 million on 37 projects in three years. We are doing what we can in this state, within the limits of our budget. We would like to see the commonwealth come on board and start to support farmers and regional communities in WA with new water infrastructure, in the same way that a succession of commonwealth Liberal–National governments have pumped billions of dollars into the Murray–Darling scheme. We would like to see some of that money flowing to WA and, for once, we would like to see the Nationals WA support us in that endeavour.