

WATERWISE PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT

**655. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister for Water:**

I refer to the \$26 million expansion of the McGowan Labor government's waterwise public housing project. Can the minister outline to the house how this project will help save water and reduce the cost of living for some of the most vulnerable members of our community?

**The SPEAKER:** I give the call to the Minister for Water, who does have permission to use a prop if he likes!

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

Yes, that is right. We will get to that in a minute, Madam Speaker. Do not spoil my surprise!

**The SPEAKER:** You have got everyone's attention now, you see.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** That is right. Yes; you have raised their expectations!

I thank the member for the question. This week is National Water Week and I was very pleased, as part of National Water Week, to announce jointly with the Minister for Housing a \$26 million expansion of the waterwise public housing project. Members are aware that for 20-odd years or more, we have been encouraging home owners to be waterwise. We know that climate change is having a significant impact on our rainfall, and that is making our water supply more scarce and more expensive, so we have been encouraging households to do things like put waterwise showerheads in their bathrooms—I will get back to that in a minute—waterwise toilets and all those sorts of things, so that we are not wasting precious water.

When we came to government, it concerned me to find that although we are making headway with new properties, a whole bunch of existing housing stock in Western Australia is full of inefficient products. Although we encourage people to build more efficient homes, we have this legacy issue and the state government actually owns a lot of those properties. We have 30 000 to 40 000 public housing properties. Many of them are waterwise because they are new and have been updated, but there are some legacy properties. Therefore, it is incumbent on us as a government to lead in this area.

In 2019, we ran a pilot during which we audited 1 000 public housing properties, and the results are really quite outstanding. By putting water-efficient fixtures into those houses, the tenants saved 27 per cent on their water bills, and as a result they saved between \$66 and \$145 on their actual bills. Across that program, 142 million litres of water were saved in those 1 000 properties. Having run the pilot, today we have expanded it. We are committing to retrofitting 10 000 public houses with new fixtures just like this one I am holding here. The response from tenants has been absolutely amazing. I was talking to some of the plumbers today and the response from the tenants is extraordinary. Getting new fixtures uplifts the whole house. We will save 4.4 billion litres of water over the next five years of the program. It is absolutely fantastic.

To channel the Prime Minister, it is not a lump of coal; it is a waterwise showerhead. Do not be afraid of it! It will not hurt you. Members opposite, it is a great way of fighting climate change because it reduces not only your water bill, but also your power bill. Most people have a hot shower, so they save water and they save on energy and they reduce emissions.

It is worth noting that former President Donald Trump, in 2020, actually scrapped the federal government's regulations on showerheads. It had been regulating showerheads since 1992. Donald Trump complained that a waterwise showerhead did not give him enough water to wash his hair—that is what he said! He effectively scrapped the waterwise regulations relating to showerheads.

On this side of the house, we understand that it is important to be waterwise. We understand that it is important for the government not just to tell other people to do stuff, but to lead, and that is why we are making this investment in our own properties. We understand that everyone is a winner. The tenants pay lower water bills and their houses look better and are better places to live; we save precious water, we reduce energy use and emissions, and we assist in the battle against climate change.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Roe with the last question.