

YARRAGADEE AQUIFER, NEW BORES

**886. Mr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:**

I refer to the Premier's response to the question without notice asked yesterday about the commissioning of three new bores in the Yarragadee aquifer.

- (1) Is the minister aware whether the Water Corporation has made an application to the Water and Rivers Commission to extract 15 gigalitres from the proposed new bores that were announced yesterday?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the Minister for Government Enterprises advised the Legislative Council yesterday that he was not in a position to advise whether environmental approval for extracting water from the proposed new bores had been obtained?
- (3) Has the Government given approval for work to commence on these new bores when it is not certain that they will pass environmental approval?

**Dr EDWARDS replied:**

- (1)-(3) The Government has been worried about the water situation in Western Australia since last July. It has done a number of things to address that problem. In September, stage 4 restrictions were introduced, which meant that people could use scheme water to water gardens on only two days a week. In December, the Government did something that the previous Government thought about doing but never would do; that is, it put daytime sprinkler bans on domestic household bores. That did not happen overnight. Since July I have spoken to people about the fact that the Government is worried because the State is so dry. I told them that the Government was thinking of introducing those bans. Last July, I spoke to the Western Australian Municipal Association, as it was then known. The Government has thought through these matters and has watched what has been happening. We wanted to introduce step-by-step measures to respond to the situation that we now face. The Government also instituted a major advertising campaign to draw people's attention to what was going on and about the need to be conservative in the use of water.

Last Friday, the boards of the Water and Rivers Commission and the Water Corporation held a joint meeting. For many months I had told the Water and Rivers Commission to keep speaking to the Water Corporation and the Environmental Protection Authority because I was worried about not just this summer but also the summer to follow. One of the things acknowledged in the draft minutes from that meeting was that the Water Corporation and the Water and Rivers Commission have been working extremely closely for the past six months to bring forward this Yarragadee proposal. In addition, I have spoken on a number of occasions with the chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority about the need to make sure we address that problem. The EPA has been kept fully informed and we are moving towards sinking deeper bores in the Yarragadee. The Water and Rivers Commission has considered this matter and has agreed to give the Water Corporation extra gigalitres from these three deep Yarragadee bores for the next three years, on condition that further scientific studies are done to gain an understanding of what is going on. Recently the Water and Rivers Commission arranged for the Centre for Groundwater Studies to investigate this issue and provide more information about the recharge areas. In addition, the Water Corporation and the Water and Rivers Commission are developing a computer model to provide more information.

There is an urgent need to start work on this stage of the Yarragadee proposal. We desperately need those 15 gigalitres and we need the time span to ensure proper supplies of water for next summer. This is an urgent situation and all members of Parliament should support it.