

WATER DEFICIENCY DECLARATIONS

Statement by Minister for Water

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [12.21 pm]: I rise to talk about water deficiency declarations in the great southern. Climate change is real and the south west of Western Australia has seen decreased rainfall over the last four decades. Last year, many parts of Western Australia had low winter rainfall and areas of the great southern have had these dry conditions compounded by little or no rain through summer.

Last week, I approved a water deficiency declaration for Mt Short in the Shire of Ravensthorpe. Today, I have declared the same for the Mallee Hill area in the Shire of Lake Grace. These declarations have been made to protect animal welfare. As a result, the government will cart water to central tanks in these areas to reduce the distance local farmers have to travel to access emergency water for their livestock.

Mr R.S. Love: What do you charge them?

Mr D.J. KELLY: It is free.

The minister approves a water deficiency declaration on application from a local government on behalf of a group of farmers. A declaration is made when farmers are required to cart water for their livestock from more than 40 kilometres away and once on-farm water supplies and strategic community water supplies have been depleted. Once a declaration has been made, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation organises for water to be carted to a central location for use by the affected farmers. Water carting continues until the water deficiency declaration is lifted when rain commences and on-farm supplies are restored.

For the Mallee Hill area in Lake Grace, water will be sourced from the integrated great southern town supply and the Kukerin town water supply dam, and carted to a tank at Tommy's dam. For Lake Grace, approximately 350 kilolitres of water will be carted each week for seven farmers. Carting will commence tomorrow. For Ravensthorpe, approximately 280 kilolitres of water will be carted each week for eight farmers. Carting in this area commenced last week.

Western Australia will feel the effects of climate change more than almost any other area on the planet. The McGowan government will continue to work closely with shires and farmers to ensure continuing access to water for livestock.