HYDROLOGY AND WATER RESOURCES SYMPOSIUM

Statement by Minister for Water

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [12.10 pm]: I rise to inform the house that the thirty-fifth Hydrology and Water Resources Symposium is underway in Perth. The forum has attracted more than 200 engineers, scientists, hydrologists and water resource managers from around the world to discuss hydrology and water issues. As I am sure the house is aware, Western Australia is leading the world in its knowledge of groundwater sources and the impact climate change is having on these sources. One of the key themes of the conference is further understanding and managing our water sources as the climate varies. Dr Hartmut Wittenberg, Emeritus Professor, Hydrology and Water Resources Management at Leuphana University of Luneburg in Germany, is presenting a keynote address on the impact of climate change on water resources around the world. Another key theme is flood mitigation. The symposium will provide an opportunity for the industry to look at the guidelines used in designing infrastructure for flood protection and mitigation.

Western Australia has a long history of innovative solutions for water management. In my part of the world, the pipeline that C.Y. O'Connor built in the late nineteenth century supplied water to the goldfields and the central wheatbelt, allowing the areas to be opened for development. In Kununurra, the damming of the Ord River in the 1970s has led to the development of over 15 000 hectares of prime agricultural land as well as supplying water for hydropower generation. New infrastructure is opening up an additional 14 000 hectares to bring the total to 29 000 hectares of irrigated farmland. This history of innovation has led to the development of the two desalination plants and the groundwater replenishment trial that are helping to droughtproof Perth. We are funding more than $30 million worth of groundwater investigations across the state, the majority of which have been funded by the royalties for regions program to investigate and assess regional water availability, helping us to plan for the water needs of a growing regional population. Research is being undertaken across the state to determine how much groundwater exists, how these aquifers are recharged, the quality of the water and how we can use the water sustainably to develop industry and support population growth. Underpinning this research is a world-class understanding of hydrology and water resources. Conferences such as the one I opened yesterday ensure that our engineers, scientists and hydrologists continue to build on their knowledge by sharing with and learning from a community of experts.