

WATER FOR FOOD PROJECT — MYALUP–WELLINGTON AND SOUTHERN FORESTS

241. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Water:

The Minister for Water seems pretty popular today. I refer to the Water for Food project, specifically the Myalup–Wellington and Southern Forests projects.

- (1) Does the government support these two projects proceeding?
- (2) How much state government funding will the minister commit to?
- (3) Has the minister advised the commonwealth government of the state government's support?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

Thank you very much. Yes, I do feel popular today.

(1)–(3) I think I have answered a question on this issue —

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Just for the moment.

I think I have answered a question about these projects before. One of the problems of the previous government, particularly National Party ministers, was that in the lead-up to the last state election it went around trying to spend as much money as it possibly could under the banner of royalties for regions. The Water for Food program was one of those examples. It was a \$40 million program for most of the term of the previous government, but in the dying months of government it was ramped up to a \$127 million program. It committed to an additional —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party!

Mr D.J. KELLY: The member might just want to listen.

In the dying months of the previous government, it committed another \$80 million to the Water for Food program. It committed to another four programs. Two of those —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, one of your own members has asked a question. You might want to listen to the answer. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: There were two programs. One was the project to try to make better use of the water in Wellington Dam, which is currently too salty to be used to its maximum economic effect. The other was the Southern Forests irrigation program—a new program to boost agricultural production around Manjimup. They are projects that we have been considering, along with all of the royalties for regions programs. I can tell members that we have indicated to the commonwealth our continuing support for both of those projects.

Mr D.T. Redman: It is not such a pet project after all!

Mr D.J. KELLY: Sorry, member?

Mr D.T. Redman: You spent the first five minutes saying how bad it was and now you're saying you support it.

Mr D.J. KELLY: That is interesting coming from a former Leader of the National Party. When a government spends as much as the former government did, it is hard not to spend some of it wisely! It has to achieve something. From the amount of cash that the former government threw away, it would be almost impossible for some of it not to be of some use! We are currently sifting through those projects, as numerous as they are. In respect of those two projects, we have met with the communities that put them forward. We have taken advice. We have spoken to the commonwealth and have actually decided that we will continue to support those two projects. We have indicated to the federal minister that there will be ongoing support. The member will have to wait for some announcements a bit later about the level of that support. Members of the National Party were so irresponsible leading up to the last state election. It was as though they deliberately tried to spend all of the royalties for regions funds for the next four years on projects that only they seemed to think were worthwhile. Members should just relax; let us and some of the other grown-ups on this side of the house work through the mess that the former government created with royalties for regions and they will find that some of those projects will in fact be supported.