

WATER CORPORATION — JOB LOSSES

183. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Water:

I refer the minister to recent media reports about 300 job losses at Water Corporation —

- (1) Given that the minister has confirmed to the media that the Water Corporation is looking to cut 300 jobs or 10 per cent of its workforce, why has the minister not made a clear statement to Parliament about the government's intentions?
- (2) How can the minister justify the job losses at the Water Corporation by claiming it has a reduced need for capital expenditure when the Water Corporation's own five-year plan indicates that it needs more capital expenditure to keep its assets to a satisfactory standard?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It has taken some time for him to show his concern for the workers at the Water Corporation.

Several members interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: He has had plenty of opportunity.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Bassendean, I call you and the Deputy Premier to order for the first time. I would have thought that the minister should be given a chance to at least answer the question, member for Bassendean.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am very happy to answer the question. The member for Bassendean will remember that at the end of last year I foreshadowed that the Water Corporation was going through a period of change and that there were likely to be job losses, so I have spoken to the Parliament about this in the past. We have been very open and up-front with the workers and employees of the Water Corporation. The opposition's argument in this space is that the Water Corporation should maintain the status quo even though its business and operating environment has changed. It is a flawed argument.

In the past 10 years we have drought-proofed Perth and made significant investment in infrastructure that means that the Perth and south west interconnected system is now fixed. We have had a massive investment in the Pilbara and incredible —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Listen to the answer, member.

We have had massive population growth that the organisation has made investment to keep up with. We do not keep spending once we have done the job. We have drought-proofed —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We have drought-proofed Perth and the interconnected system, and significant investment has gone towards making changes and drought-proofing the rest of the state.

The SPEAKER: Member for Victoria Park!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The member needs to look at the investment we have made across the state in this space. I am not saying that we are stopping further expenditure from the Water Corporation in WA. There will still be a significant asset spend and there are still significant things to be done. However, we will not keep spending at the rate at which we have been for the past 10 years when we have achieved the outcome sought.

We are shifting into a period of operations and maintenance, and there is still significant investment to come. But what we do not want is the Water Corporation operating inefficiently, so there will be changes to some of the employment statuses out there and we are working through that process. The organisation is continuing to talk to its employees, and over the next six to 12 months there will be redundancies. The union has been involved in these conversations along the way because the employees have been involved in the conversations along the way. I will keep Parliament and the public apprised of all the changes as they occur, but I am not going to stand in this place and tell the member specifically which jobs are going because we need to make sure we have the right people in the right jobs doing the right thing to make sure that we are actually reducing pressure on future price increases. We have to make sure the Water Corporation is operating efficiently. The member's logic in this case—he has been making comments in public—is flawed.

