

WATER CORPORATION — ABORIGINAL PROCUREMENT POLICY

Statement by Minister for Water

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [9.12 am]: Last Friday, I had the pleasure of attending the Aboriginal suppliers gathering hosted by the Water Corporation. It was a great event with really positive feedback. Our government is focused on increasing Aboriginal procurement levels and has set a target of three per cent of all contracts over \$50 000 being awarded to Aboriginal suppliers this year. I am pleased to say that the Water Corporation has gone above and beyond this target, achieving 3.5 per cent of all contracts of a value greater than \$50 000 being awarded to Aboriginal suppliers. The gathering is part of the Water Corporation's ongoing commitment to procure goods and services from Aboriginal suppliers. This work is led by the Water Corporation's reconciliation action plan. The reconciliation action plan seeks to improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal Western Australians within the Water Corporation, by setting progressive procurement targets and improving water infrastructure in remote communities. The gathering was a fantastic opportunity for the Water Corporation to continue to lead cross-industry collaboration to create economic opportunities for Aboriginal people across the state. The forum provides Aboriginal suppliers with an understanding of the Water Corporation's works programs and provides them with information on procurement processes, such as panel contracts and how to submit a contract bid.

The Water Corporation is also performing well against other Closing the Gap targets and has a dedicated Aboriginal affairs section within its regional assets planning team. The Aboriginal affairs team provides leadership and expertise to support the organisation to establish and maintain sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal communities and people wherever they operate. The Water Corporation also has a dedicated Aboriginal employment and development team whose role is to encourage and actively recruit Aboriginal employees. Through the work of this team and the dedication of the Water Corporation, the Aboriginal employment rate has risen steadily since June 2018, from 3.5 per cent of the total Water Corporation workforce to 4.8 per cent in June 2021. These employment figures include a number of Aboriginal trainees and apprentices, giving young Aboriginal people the opportunity to commence their careers at the Water Corporation. The McGowan government is dedicated to improving outcomes for Aboriginal Western Australians and as Minister for Water I want to ensure that I am doing everything possible to ensure greater access to employment and business opportunities. I thank the Water Corporation, its board and chief executive officer, Pat Donovan, for their dedication and efforts in assisting the government to do just that.