

MINISTER FOR WATER — VISIT TO SINGAPORE

Statement by Minister for Water

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [12.05 pm]: I rise today to inform the house of my recent visit to Singapore from 31 May to 5 June. The purpose of the visit was to attend Singapore International Water Week with ministers and leaders from around the globe. The conference is held biennially. More than 500 delegates participated in the high-level Water Leaders Summit focusing on good governance and leadership, financial sustainability, community engagement and innovation necessary to secure water for the future. I also took the opportunity to visit some of Singapore's water environment projects and research and technology centres, including its NEWater education and production facility, which is where Singapore regenerates high-quality recycled water. Living in one of the driest areas of the world and continuing to manage changing rainfall patterns and a growing population provides some challenges of water use, and it was extremely valuable to learn how other countries and cities are managing their water issues. WA has identified recycled water as a key element in meeting our future water needs, and managing wastewater was a theme with a number of countries talking about wastewater as a resource and not just a problem to be managed. Stormwater harvesting and reclaimed wastewater to be purified and re-used was a topic of conversation from the largest utility to a district-level wastewater treatment company in Arizona. Of particular interest to Western Australians and this government will be the Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize honouring excellence in water innovation. This year's award went to Orange County Water District for its pioneering work in groundwater management and water reclamation using advanced water re-use technologies. In layman's terms, Orange County is cleaning wastewater and reinjecting it into the aquifer to be recycled for indirect potable use. This is precisely the process that the Water Corporation has been undertaking at the groundwater replenishment trial in Beenyup. This government has committed to moving from the trial to a full-scale advanced groundwater replenishment scheme, and it was useful to learn more about the journey that Orange County has undertaken to be considered best practice in the sector. There were numerous opportunities to discuss the need to continue to plan for infrastructure well ahead, taking into account urban development, population growth and the needs of industry to provide an affordable supply of water into the future.

A highlight of the trip was visiting the Kallang River at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park. Previously, this park was a concrete U-drain running between housing estates. Under Singapore's Active, Beautiful, Clean Waters Programme, this drain has been transformed into an attractive and functional waterway and public open space. It has reconnected the people of Singapore to the importance of keeping their waterways clean, as they all feed into one of their major water sources.

I was privileged to engage in conversations with delegates such as water ministers from China, Denmark, the Netherlands and Singapore, business and community leaders from the United Nations, and scientists, international water agencies and industry. Singapore International Water Week is an opportunity to take a global view of water issues and solutions, and also to better understand the requirements of the market for water research and technology in which Western Australian industries can play a role. I was joined by the director general of the Department of Water, Maree De Lacey; and the CEO, Sue Murphy, and chair, Eva Skira, of the Water Corporation. I offer my sincere thanks to Mr Geoffrey Stephens from Singapore's public utilities board for his assistance in setting up meetings to add value to our conference program while we were in Singapore.