

PILBARA — GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES

**607. Mr B.J. GRYLLS to the Minister for Water:**

The Minister for Water and I were recently in the Pilbara where a large amount of groundwater has been discovered in the Hamersley Range and the west Canning Basin. Can the minister provide the house with an update on how the Liberal–National government is securing water supplies across the Pilbara?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:**

I thank the member for Pilbara for the question. I have spoken in this place previously about the groundwater investigation program that the Department of Water is currently running to further our understanding of the vast water resources we have available and how much we can sustainably use, going forward, to support the growth and development of this great state. Six of these investigations have been part of a \$25 million investment from royalties for regions, and they are looking at identifying new sources of water or proving up resources in areas in which some investigations have already been carried out. Work is being done in Dampier, in the Hamersley Range near Karratha, the west Canning Basin, Murchison, and the Swan and eastern Scott coastal plain. In the Pilbara, the economic powerhouse of the state and the nation, we need to have a sustainable store of water ready to assist current development and any further development in that part of the state. That is why we have had this state government program running up there under royalties for regions and Pilbara Cities. We have also been putting some effort into proving up water in that space.

Over the winter recess we travelled up to Port Hedland and announced some of the findings of this process. In the Hamersley Range there is the potential for an extra 30 gegalitres of water per year that can be used to promote growth in Onslow and West Pilbara. We think that about 10 gegalitres of that can go to Onslow and 20 gegalitres can be piped to the West Pilbara scheme, which supplies the towns of Dampier, Karratha, Roebourne and Wickham. That adds to the water that we have already proved up in the Bungaroo valley, which is now being used by Rio Tinto; I have spoken about that previously.

The Water Corporation has also done some work in that space and has invested in some of the regional infrastructure that is required to support that growth, and we are continuing to support growth in that part of the state. In the west Canning Basin there is a very exciting discovery: 100 gegalitres of water that can be used around Port Hedland and Pardoo. We have already proved up 50 gegalitres and allocated it; we have identified 10 gegalitres in and around Port Hedland; almost 20 gegalitres per year licensed and committed towards a staged development of irrigation on pastoral leases; and up to 20 gegalitres will be used for North Star mining operations by 2016. During the break we also announced a further 50 gegalitres in the Sandfire area of the Canning Basin, just 200 kilometres from Port Hedland, and it is really good, fresh, quality water. The findings of this groundwater investigation are very exciting, and it is absolutely about supporting the diversification and growth of the Pilbara. As we make further investigations across the state, that is exactly what we will do: support small businesses, diversification of agriculture and opportunities for mining and industry. That is what this government is all about. It is very exciting, and I look forward to keeping the house updated as we make further discoveries in this space.