

WATER SERVICES BILL 2011
WATER SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT AND REPEAL BILL 2011

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from 9 November 2011.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [12.22 pm]: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for giving me the call again; it was November when I was rudely interrupted, and it has taken quite some time to resume; members have all been on the edge of their seats, waiting for me to complete the rest of my contribution! I made some remarks in the four minutes I used about some local water issues. I just want to emphasise that I have spoken to the City of Gosnells. Even though this falls within the member for Forrestfield’s electorate, the City of Gosnells urges the Water Corporation to move that pipeline so that it can do a redevelopment in Maddington. I am sure the Minister for Water knows all about that. It is a bit silly that blocks in Beckenham and East Cannington, which are close to the catchments of the Canning River, still do not have deep sewerage, and I look forward to those infill issues being fixed. I also look forward to the minister spending some time thinking about the drainage systems that keep Queens Park, East Cannington and Beckenham above water.

I also want to explore some issues regarding water infrastructure and the views of others. I was interested in the Minister for Water’s brief ministerial statement this morning. I am quoting not from *Hansard*, but from the tabled document of the minister’s speech this morning, which reads —

Mr Speaker, I was personally very proud to open the Southern Seawater desalination plant on the 2 September last year. And I am also proud of the decision this Liberal–National Government made to double the capacity of the desalination plant to 100 gegalitres and expand key pipelines.

I also refer to the joint press release by the Premier and the Minister for Water on 1 August 2011, under the heading “Perth’s new major water supply secured”. It states, in part —

Work will begin immediately to double the capacity of the Southern Seawater Desalination Plant (SSDP) to provide 100 billion litres of drinking water a year securing future water needs for communities stretching from Perth to the Goldfields.

Premier Colin Barnett said the decision to move now on the expansion of the new plant was essential because of the lack of inflow from rainfall into the dams for the second winter in a row.

A little further down, there is a quote from the Premier that reads —

“We had to act decisively as a Government and take direct action now. This decision is a major step in providing security to our water supplies even in the driest of years.”

I point out that this government is committed to building desalination plants as an opportunity to secure future water supply in Western Australia, and that is quite frankly a sensible decision; it follows on from the very good decisions made by the Gallop and Carpenter governments to move down this track. The member for Balcatta is a former Minister for Water Resources and one of the people who made the tough decision last decade to secure the south west part of Western Australia’s water future by building those desalination plants.

But not everybody agreed with those decisions, and it is interesting to refer to the *Hansard* of 15 May 2008 and see what the member for Cottesloe, the current Premier, had to say about it. I will quote a number of things he said that day. He said —

However, sooner rather than later we will face the fundamental question of where the next big water resource or supply will come from.

...

For this government the solution now appears to be desalination. There are lots of things that we can or should do and they could all extend the time before we may face a crisis, but eventually we will run out of options. Eventually we will get to the stage of deciding where the next big water supply will come from.

Further along in the same speech, he stated —

We face a dilemma. In fact, the more we concentrate population in Perth, and the more that Perth draws water from surrounding areas, the more inevitable it is that people will live only in Perth.

He went on to say, in respect of desalination plants —

How reliable the plants prove to be, given that they use saline and hypersaline water, remains to be seen.

He also said —

To me, desalination is back-up, a reserve, something to avoid the water crisis ever happening.

That is a very interesting quote, given the government’s 10-year plan for water infrastructure in this state. It is titled “Water Forever Whatever the Weather”, and there is a lovely photo of the Minister for Water on the third page, looking very fetching without a tie, standing near the sea!

Mr W.R. Marmion: It’s in Esperance.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Esperance; there you go! The document includes two pie charts; the first shows the current water sources and the second shows future water sources and where they are going to go. These charts show that the government’s plan over the next 10 years is to increase reliance on desalination—the policy that the now Premier said was to avoid a crisis. Let us say that all he is doing is filling in the gap. However, then we go to a Water Corporation document, “Water Forever”, published in October 2009, a climate resilience summary, and its 50-year plan for water sources in Western Australia. At the back, on the last page, is a table setting out all the options. One of the options that is not on that long-term table is a canal from the north of the state. It is clear, from all the planning that this government has done, that its future is in desalination; the Premier said that that was only to solve a crisis, not a long-term solution, yet that is the very long-term solution that the Premier has chosen.

I want to continue further with some of the other things the now Premier said on 15 May 2008, when he thought he might be retiring. He talked about how he had in his mind, following on from Ernie Bridge and others, ideas about getting water from the Kimberley. He said —

That started me thinking. I thought that was strange. As it would happen, I got a knock on the door from Paul Salteri, the head of the company Tenix, who came to see me to talk about the concept of bringing water south from the Kimberley. I had dealt with Tenix as a minister. It is a major engineering company in Australia. It builds battleships, power stations, transmission lines etc.

...

Tenix had been involved in looking at a proposal for cotton farming in the area.

That is, in the Kimberley. He explains the circumstances that led to Tenix to come up with the idea of building a canal. The member for Cottesloe continued —

He had approached Dr Gallop, who refused to see him; he would not talk about it.

Now, I know that that is not true, but let us not worry about that. I was present when Paul Salteri spoke to then Premier Gallop in Sydney, so I do not understand why the current Premier said that they never met, but we will leave that aside. He continued —

In desperation, he came to see me as the Leader of the Opposition and said, “We have worked on this for 12 months. We have done all the desktop studies, we have surveyed the site, done all the analyses and there are pages of reports. I believe it works.” I take someone like Paul Salteri and a company like Tenix seriously when a company of that sophistication brings a proposal to me.

He goes on —

I did back the canal, and maybe it is a bit over the top in the context of an election campaign. Interestingly enough—and I accept the sort of ridicule one gets from opponents in a campaign—the media ridiculed it.

He then compared the idea of a Kimberley canal with the visionary pipeline of C.Y. O’Connor to the Kalgoorlie region. There is a fundamental difference between the Kimberley canal and the C.Y. O’Connor pipeline. The C.Y. O’Connor pipeline was to deliver water to the goldfields where there was incredible wealth but the wealth could not be extracted because there was no pipeline. It was not like Perth where there is an established community with established infrastructure. The C.Y. O’Connor pipeline was to deliver something that did not exist. There was no alternative to delivering water through the C.Y. O’Connor pipeline. If it had not been delivered through the Kalgoorlie pipeline, there would have been no water and if there had been no water, there would have been no gold extraction. The Kimberley canal proposal is fundamentally different from what occurred in the Kalgoorlie region and that pipeline. The now Premier talked about other examples around the world and said —

In Iraq the Sweet Water Canal supplies water to the city of Basra.

That canal is about 150 kilometres long. He continues —

In Egypt the Sheikh Zayed Canal is being built at present. It will essentially create a second Nile Valley; —

Again, that is a couple of hundred kilometres long —

a massive project for the huge population of Egypt. Libya—a small country, rich in oil—has the Great Man-Made River Project, some 4 000 kilometres of massive pipelines literally beneath the Sahara Desert.

It is true that there are 4 000 kilometres of pipeline but the longest one is about 150 kilometres. The scale of those projects is completely different. The other point I make about the Libyan project is that it was done by a dictatorship. Muammar Gaddafi was able to make a decision to invest all the country’s wealth in that single project because he did not have to worry about providing schools, hospitals and proper services to everyone else. He was a dictator. I would not want to comment about why the Premier might have been attracted to that process of decision making. The idea that what was done in Libya is analogous to bringing water to Perth from the Kimberley is simply not true. The now Premier went on and talked about other overseas projects. He said of India —

They are currently looking at and probably will proceed with a project that will involve some 300 reservoirs across India and 12 000 kilometres of canals to control the river and the water of the Himalayas across the arid subcontinent of India.

Again, it is not an analogous project; it is about individual projects that might link together rather than a single project that stretches thousands of kilometres. It is not the same as bringing water to Perth from the Kimberley. He continues —

Los Angeles has been getting water for more than 80 years from canals in the Hoover Dam system.

That is very interesting because during the election campaign on the Wednesday prior to the election in 2005 there was a television item on Channel Seven in which the manager of the canal in California was asked by the Channel Seven reporter what was the one piece of advice he would give to the people of Perth who were contemplating bringing water from the Kimberley, and he said, “Don’t do it.” Any proper analysis of what has happened in California is an advertisement against open channels. The people who built that canal were visionary. They built a canal that had an enormous capacity for the future of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, the politicians said, “Let’s not worry about what happens in 80 years’ time; let’s use the water to grow oranges and other fruits in the valleys behind Los Angeles”, so now Los Angeles is running out of water. There is plenty of water in the canal but it is all being used by the rural industries on the inner hinterland. If members want to see an advertisement for how not to build a canal, they should go to Los Angeles. I am glad that the Premier raised that because it was a silly thing to do. It is not relevant. Again, it is only a couple of hundred kilometres long.

He then talked about evaporation. If members look at the website of the Bureau of Meteorology they will see that in the Kimberley the rainfall is about one metre a year but the evaporation rate is about 1.5 metres a year. There is half a metre more evaporation than there is rainfall. That is why when we go to the Kimberley, as I did last week, we do not see the verdant forests that can be seen in Indonesia, which is a tropical country to our north. It is nothing like that.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: In fact, the landscape in the Kimberley is not called a tropical landscape; it is a tropical savanna. It is a particular type of landscape because of the incredibly high evaporation rate. The idea that there is all this surplus water in the north is something that has to be given proper consideration. I am not saying that we cannot use any of the water flowing out of the Fitzroy River or any of the other rivers in the north, but consideration must be given to the ecological effect of taking that water. Which marine creatures rely on that flush of water off the land? I do not know and I bet the Premier does not know what the effect of taking large quantities of water out of that river would be. The other thing is that if we bring the water down here, it cannot be used in the north. It was interesting that the Liberal Party candidate at the 2005 election opposed the canal, as did the then federal member for Kalgoorlie, who is now the member for Durack, Barry Haase. He opposed the canal. These are not minor things.

The minister handling the bill is an engineer. When the Premier announced his grand vision to build the canal in 2005, apart from talking to Paul Salteri—who was quite embarrassed about what happened, but I will leave that aside—I spoke to an engineer who said that this is not a simple project. It is not like building a road, and I will explain why. As we all know, there are very large riverbeds in the north. Every so often a cyclone dumps a huge amount of rain that washes out a bridge. If it is on a road, we can fix the bridge but if a canal is severed, all the

water stops flowing. It is not analogous to fixing a bridge because before the bridge can be fixed the road still works, we just cannot cross the bridge. However, if the canal is severed, the entire length of the canal is unusable. The engineer pointed out to me that we need to worry about wash-outs. There is an incredible level of water flow from cyclones in that area. That means that each river crossing, whether or not there is water in the river, has to be protected against a 100-year flood because otherwise Perth would lose its water supply. That cannot be sensible.

The Premier also talked in his speech, and at other times, about how it is downhill all the way. I do not have in front of me the report done by Professor Reg Appleyard but I understand that about an 800-metre rise has to be accounted for on the Tenix route. That means pumping water 800 metres uphill. It is not a matter of whether it is higher here or lower there; it is what the topography is like over the whole distance. Every time the pipeline encounters a hill, the water must be pumped up. Nothing can be done about that. It is not that gravity allows it to run downhill the whole way because it is higher there and lower here; every piece of topography has to be taken into account. If that is not done, the only other way to do it is to build tunnels. The Minister for Water is nodding his head and smiling because he knows how hard it is to build tunnels. Another thing about river crossings, particularly when it is an active river—there are large rivers down south—is that a siphon must be built underneath the river. That is what the engineers tell me. A system to run the water underneath the river would have to be built. It could be built across the river but that would require a pump. I am told that the only way to do it without pumping the water is to build a siphon. The Minister for Water, who is an engineer, will probably correct me if I am wrong. He says that I am right. That is what I was told. Once again, that is not a simple piece of engineering; it is a very complex piece of engineering.

These are all fundamental issues. I accept that the Premier has a grand vision and sees this as building the state. He comes in here and goes on about all the wonderful things that would be delivered by building the Kimberley canal, but there are a couple of things the Premier must explain when he does that. Why has he now rejected the building of the Kimberley canal? Why is it not even in his 50-year vision for the water supply of this state? If it is an essential piece of infrastructure for Western Australia, as he said on 15 May 2008, is he not derelict in his duty? If he says that it is essential, how can he dare to not even plan to build the Kimberley canal in the next half century? I will tell members why he is not planning to build the Kimberley canal. It is because it would not work in the way that he told us it would work or how he said it would work when he was supporting it. The Premier stated —

To build a canal project of that scale is about the same in engineering complexity and cost as building a road from one place to another.

He is wrong. That is simply a fact. The Premier was mistaken when he said those things. It is a very complex and very difficult engineering project. There are lots of pensioners in my electorate. I cannot go to any pensioner function where somebody does not raise with me the idea of bringing water from the north. It is a popular idea. About six or seven years ago—I cannot remember the exact time; it does not matter anymore—an internal Labor Party poll said that 72 per cent of Western Australians supported the idea of building the Kimberley canal. I imagine that if we did another poll now, people would support it again. Interestingly, 56 per cent of people in that same internal poll said that it was too risky to construct the canal the way the Premier wanted without a proper planning process and that is why he lost the 2005 election. Effectively, he lost it on that one issue.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He has; that is the problem. Even when he thought he was retiring when he was in opposition, he was happy to say that it was an essential piece of infrastructure. This was his 50-year plan but there is no canal. If he honestly believed the things he said, he would have demanded that the canal be put into the budget.

Mr F.A. Alban: Is that the same with the Ellenbrook rail line?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Well, mate, I never promised the Ellenbrook rail line. You did.

Mr F.A. Alban: Your party did.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: You walked away —

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Armadale, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Cannington, if you are going to refer to members across the chamber, I will insist from this point on that you call them by the seat that they represent.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sorry, Mr Speaker; I do apologise for that. I should have called the member by his correct title.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Acting Speaker; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Ms Margaret Quirk

This is the problem. It was all right when the Premier wanted to write “Black Swan”—we are still waiting for that book to be published—and it was all right when he was in opposition and he thought he was retiring and he wanted to talk about grand visions, but he got into government and his 50-year plan does not even mention it. This is the problem for the Premier today. He has all the tools. He has everything at his disposal. If he honestly believes what he said on 15 May 2008 and if that is a statement of his belief, he should implement it right away. If he has changed his mind or worked out that it is not so good, he should tell us that too. The problem is that the Premier likes to be the vision guy. The Premier gave a statement about his visit to Singapore and how we should be joint listing companies with the Australian and Singapore exchanges. I have asked him what planning he has done for that and who he talked to. It will be interesting to see that answer when it comes back. It is easy to be the vision guy; it is hard to do the delivery.

The Minister for Water is the one with the carriage of the bill. I hope that he will remember what I said in October last year about those projects in my electorate, because they are needed. Various issues often come up. As state secretary of the Labor Party I remember that people would often come to us and talk about the idea of desalinating the highly saline water in the wheatbelt and delivering it to the coast. I admire the government. It promised to carry out an assessment of that. It kept its word and it did do an assessment of that project. I understand that the report from the engineers was given to the government in October 2010. I think that is right; I might be a month out. It was in the third quarter of 2010. I have read the report. The minister released the report on 7 September 2011, a year later. That report shows that it is not financially viable. There are a couple of individual spots in the wheatbelt where it makes sense but generally speaking it is a very expensive option for providing water to the coast. There are a lot of good ideas about water supply but when we get the engineers out to look at them, they do not stack up as cost effective. That is why the last government and this government are going down the path of desalination because that is the genuinely rainfall independent alternative. The Premier also referred to the question of the energy supply for a desalination plant. I admire the fact that the government recently announced that the desalination plant would be powered by renewable energy. It was interesting to read the Premier’s comments about that. He said —

The government cannot run a desalination plant with renewable energy.

That is a direct quote from the Premier. Apparently, that is not true either. He has changed his mind about that.

Mr W.R. Marmion interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, that is right. We can offset the power, which is exactly what the former Labor government did, which the Premier said was a con, and this government does it. I think it is a reasonable thing to say. I am just pointing out that the Premier did not get that one right either.

There is another thing that we need to consider when comparing desalination with the canal. This is the killer. I am sure the minister understands it himself. Let us say it will cost \$10 billion to bring water down from the north. It will probably cost more but let us say it will cost \$10 billion. Let us say a desalination plant will cost \$1 billion in round numbers. The problem with building the canal or a pipeline is that we have to build capacity for the future. We have to build the infrastructure for 80 years’ time, not for today, whereas we can build desalination plants as we need them. That will always keep state debt down. If we are going to build the 80-year canal, we would have to pay for the whole thing now and take the debt on whereas if we just build as we go with the desalination plants, it is much more affordable. The minister is nodding again. That is why sometimes the big picture is not the real picture. It is better to actually leave the rhetoric aside and talk to the engineers to see what we can achieve. That is what the Gallop Labor government did to its credit and that is what the Carpenter Labor government did to its credit and, quite frankly, that is what the Minister for Water, the member for Nedlands, is doing today. He is just following in those footsteps.

I want to conclude in the last 60 seconds with the Target 60 campaign. That is a con. That is the sort of program that is run on television to convince people that we are doing something. When the government came in, it got rid of the Waterwise campaign, which actually worked. It now has this Target 60 campaign. The website shows the exact figure—I cannot remember it—but a minuscule amount of water is being saved by Target 60, which I think is costing \$2.5 million. I cannot remember the figure; it might be \$1 million. I do not know how much the campaign is costing but it is not delivering any genuine benefit to Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the bill be read a second time. I call the member for Balcatta.

Point of Order

Mr W.R. MARMION: My list shows that the member for Balcatta has already spoken on this bill.

The SPEAKER: Unfortunately, member for Balcatta, the information appears to be correct in that sense. I will put the question again. I call the member for West Swan.

Debate Resumed

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [12.49 pm]: The member for Mandurah was right across that. The member for Balcatta was about to speak and the member for Mandurah was right on it!

Mr D.A. Templeman: It was in October when he last spoke.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Minister, can you check that I have not spoken on it too?

Mr W.R. Marmion: I did check.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Am I okay?

Mr W.R. Marmion: You’re right.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am quite surprised to be speaking so early. I was waiting to basically endorse and comment on everything the member for Balcatta said, given his long history in this portfolio.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I’ll get the *Hansard* checked and printed out.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I should have looked for the speech from last October.

I am very glad to follow the member for Cannington, in particular his analysis of the canal. I too was around in 2005 and was part of the team assessing the proposal put forward by the then opposition leader about bringing water down from the north through an open channel. We must remember that it was not a pipeline; it was a canal. I do not think I have ever seen a more ridiculous idea in my entire life in public policy. Some people support it, but they support the idea of bringing water down from up north. I think if it actually came down to canal versus pipeline, they would support the concept of a pipeline, because having a closed pipeline bringing water down seems a bit more sensible.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I did not talk about health issues.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There are so many issues regarding the canal. I agree when the member for Cannington says that people do like the idea, but the way I describe it to people who say that there is lot of water up there and that we should bring it from up north, is to tell them to look to the west—to the ocean; there is a lot of water in the ocean. Regardless of whether it is a proposal for a canal or a pipeline, given the energy and treatment costs of bringing water over thousands of kilometres, it will always be cheaper to go 10 kilometres down the road and get water from the ocean; it is as simple as that. The idea that there is no cost in bringing water down from the north because it is gravity assisted and it is going downhill, as the now Premier once said —

Mr F.M. Logan: He said it many, many times!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He said it many times!

It will always be cheaper to go to the ocean. Of course, desalination has some problems in that it is energy intensive, but when compared with transporting water over thousands of kilometres, with the energy and treatment costs of dealing with that water over that distance plus the time required for that water to flow down the pipe or canal, it will always be cheaper to go for desalination. Therefore, I have always been a big supporter of desalination in Western Australia. Like I said, there are some arguments against it, but it is a good option for an area or region as dry as Western Australia. In our metropolitan area, rain primarily falls through our winter months and we do not have the type of weather and rainfall patterns that other states do; for example Victoria. We will always need desalinated water as a key source of water for our metropolitan and regional areas. Therefore, I am glad that the government has endorsed the desalination path. When we built desal 1, I remember the criticism that came not only from the Liberal Party—of course the then opposition leader was violently against it—but also from the media and other commentators who said that desalination was not the way to go. The then Premier Geoff Gallop took a very bold step at the time. As I said, there was significant criticism from a number of areas, primarily from the media and the Liberal Party, and it was not an easy decision; I think it was one of the hardest decisions that the then Premier had to make in his first five years of government. That decision to build desal 1 allowed Western Australia to have the necessary water to fund our everyday living. Therefore, I think we all need to acknowledge the significant decision, against violent opposition, in respect of desal 1. Of course, desal 2 was the next one and it was again another bold decision, because it cost a lot, and again there were some criticisms and questions about whether we should be doing it at all. However, desalination has become an integral and essential part of our water supply system.

As I said, the current Premier was a big advocate for the canal. I remember the then opposition was going to establish the office of canal development!

Mr W.J. Johnston: I think you’ve got a T-shirt about that!

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Acting Speaker; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I have a T-shirt that says, “Office of Canal Development” actually! That is one thing I have kept in that drawer, the office of canal development T-shirt. At the time when all these questions were being asked about the cost of water, health issues and the impact a canal would have in the north, they were all going to be answered by the office of canal development. It was going to be a centre of expertise that was going to solve all the problems and issues raised about the canal.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I know who could have headed us up!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Nedlands was possibly going to be the inaugural head of the office of canal development!

Ms L.L. Baker: The minister for canals!

Mr F.M. Logan: A famous civil engineer!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My only regret is that we will never see the creation of the office of canal development, because that office of canal development was going to address all the problems. It will be a long way, but it does not matter because the office of canal development will work it out! What are the health implications? It does not matter; the office of canal development will work it out! How about the fact that it will cost \$11 billion and not the \$2 billion promised? It does not matter; the office of canal development can work it out! It is a pity that the office of canal development never came to fruition.

As I said, I believe desalination is an important part of our water supply. The member for Cannington is right that there is this sort of—shall I use the word “sexiness”; is that a word to use in this place?—or vision or whatever the word is, about bringing water from the north. But as I say to them, there is the energy and cost of bringing that water over thousands of kilometres. Yes, there is a lot of water up there, but there are significant debates and issues about how much water there is up there, and when things like environmental concerns and water needs of the north are taken into account, there is not as much water as people would expect and believe there is. However, people perceive that there is a lot of water up there. I say let us look west to the ocean; there is plenty of water there.

Another thing I am very proud of is the National Centre of Excellence in Desalination, which is the research centre that has been set up in WA. That was another initiative of the former Labor government under the science and innovation portfolio before it was cut to pieces by the current government. There was the initiative of funding to create the centre; it has been created over recent years. I think it is a huge area for WA to do research in and to be a world leader in, given our arid geography and, in particular, the sparseness of rain that we have. Again, to me desalination is the way forward and I congratulate Geoff Gallop, because it was a very —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Genuinely visionary.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It was genuinely visionary. Since then, of course, we have seen desalination take off around Australia. I just wanted to make those comments on water policy and follow on from the member for Cannington.

I want to raise a couple of issues on water in my electorate. Because the minister is in this chamber, I want to take the opportunity to talk about the Mirrabooka waste water treatment plant. I have raised this once before as a grievance, and I want to raise it again to hopefully get some solution for the seniors, in particular, in the suburb of Ballajura. The wastewater treatment plant does not fall in my electorate and I have to acknowledge the member for Nollamara, who is just about to get back in her seat; it is in her electorate. But it actually affects both of us because there is a significant buffer that has remained around that treatment plant because it uses a special type of chlorine, as I understand it. This treatment plant was built decades ago. Treatment plants built now do not need such a significant buffer and so there can be residences and other things closer to a treatment plant. This treatment plant is out near Alexander Drive. There has been a definite proposal to build an aged-care facility on that land in Paradise Quays for the seniors in Ballajura on the table for, I think, two or three years, but the concept has been floating around for about five or six years, and the waste water treatment plant is holding it up. It has actually delayed the construction or delayed the project by years. I have raised it with the minister and have raised it with the City of Swan and there seems to be a bit of an impasse.

This has to be resolved. This land has been earmarked for an aged-care facility for years. It has been put out to the tender or the expression of interest process and I understand that three tenderers came back. I understand that all of them, and I know one in particular, raised the buffer as a major impediment to building a facility. Under the impact of the current buffer, that facility is not big enough, and parts of the aged-care facility would also be required to be built right next to current residences. The removal of that buffer would allow a facility big enough to be able to be built and also to help cater for the Ballajura population. It would also ensure that there would be the right setbacks, and significant setbacks, to ensure that local residences are not affected. I just think that this is

an example of bureaucracy, in a sense, halting, not helping, a solution. We have a situation in which it is all ready to go, but there is the buffer. The issue here is that there is a cost in changing the type of facility and the type of chlorine being used, and I think the cost is between \$750 000 and around \$1 million. I think there is a wider public benefit in getting this facility built. It will not only help seniors to have a home within the community, but also help to free up other homes to allow affordable housing to be on the market. So there are numerous reasons why this facility would be a benefit, particularly, as I said, for the seniors in Ballajura. I feel terribly sorry for the seniors who have been sitting there, waiting for this facility to be constructed. They have been promised it on a number of occasions and been told, “It’s all okay; it’s all underway. Don’t you worry about that.” However, with this chlorine buffer, we have seen this extraordinary delay. I understand there are now question marks over the project. So I urge the minister and I —

Mr W.R. Marmion: Will you take an interjection?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Do you know the capital cost of the total aged-care facility project, and does it have over-55s’ accommodation as well?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes; it is a total facility, so there is the high-care unit plus the other residential area.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Do you know what the capital cost might be? It must be some millions.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is significant. I know what the minister is saying.

Mr W.R. Marmion: My point is that the cost to fund the chlorine plant to be moved to another spot so that the buffer is taken away is about \$1.2 million, from memory.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes.

Mr W.R. Marmion: So, in terms of the total capital cost and the return on the venture, spread over all the aged-care villages, it might be quite minimal.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: But it will be passed on through higher costs for those aged-care units. I think a couple of issues are at play here. We would see higher prices for those aged-care units, which is a bad thing. So that Water Corporation cost would be passed on directly to seniors wanting to buy a unit, and I think that is a negative thing. Secondly, when the Water Corporation built the plant, probably not much was around.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Correct.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Now a lot of things are happening around it. I believe that in that sort of suburbia, when an aged-care facility will be affected, there is an obligation to enter into negotiations at the very least to share costs or to change that type of chlorine facility. If that facility is so dangerous, why is it sitting right next to Alexander Drive?

Mr W.R. Marmion: That is why there is a buffer.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: But Alexander Drive is within the buffer. What I am saying is that Alexander Drive is right next door, and then the buffer extends across the road. Alexander Drive is within the buffer and I understand a bus stop is within the buffer. Therefore, if something really terrible happened, there would still be issues. I actually think there is an obligation. The government seems very keen to take efficiency dividends and to direct government trading enterprises to pay money back to the consolidated fund. It believes that there is fat in the Water Corporation, and it keeps cutting its budget and asking it to pay efficiency dividends. We also have the Minister for Housing standing up and talking about his housing affordability strategy. What a great document that is!

Mr W.R. Marmion: On another interjection, you think the Water Corp should support the development, even though it was there first.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The argument that someone was there first does not stand in any part of planning throughout the metropolitan area.

Mr W.R. Marmion: That is why you have a buffer—they are there and their facility is protected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: But we have to recognise that things change, and the fact is that when it went there, it was probably an outer suburb of Perth. It is now a middle suburb of Perth, and it is affecting the construction of aged-care units for the seniors of Ballajura. The minister and the government have to look at the position of the Water Corporation. That is fair enough.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Acting Speaker; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Ms Margaret Quirk

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So the member is opposed to getting an aged-care facility in Ballajura.

Mr F.A. Alban: No, I am not.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It sounds like you are. Honestly!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Members! Member for Swan Hills, please do not interject. Member for West Swan, please direct your comments through the Acting Speaker. Let us go!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Thank you. You were just here, Madam Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I was. I am omnipresent!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I believe that the role of a minister and a cabinet is to look at the public interest, see that there is a problem and work to solve it. I know that it might be an antiquated, narrow view of cabinet, but I think that government is there to look at the public interest and, as the owner of the Water Corporation, to work with it—direct it, if necessary, but work with it—to find a solution. For the government to say that the Water Corporation was there first, so it will let the seniors of Ballajura just not have anywhere to go and leave the land to just sit there unused for decades to come, is a ridiculous proposition.

Mr W.R. Marmion: That’s what buffers are for. Let’s build on the buffers all around Perth. Let’s build it near Cockburn Cement.

Mr F.M. Logan: The Western Australian Planning Commission suggested that we do.

Mr W.R. Marmion: I know.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Honestly, I just cannot believe how arrogant this approach is. We have a government backbencher sitting there, supporting the Water Corporation staying there and not allowing an aged-care facility to be built.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I wouldn’t want a house next to a horrible facility.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: If the member for Scarborough listened, she would know that the whole concept is to change the facility so that it is not dangerous. That is the whole concept we are talking about. We have members of this government, one of whom is a former City of Swan councillor, saying that it is too bad; we will just leave this land in a prime location in Ballajura, close to shops and close to public transport —

Ms J.M. Freeman: And we have an affordability housing crisis.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Exactly. What I am saying is that this facility would house over 100 seniors in the area. Therefore, not only would it house those seniors, but also it would free up homes to allow them to be accessed by other people throughout the community. That is the key point. The Water Corporation is saying, “Look, we would change it if someone gave us money.” So I think even the Water Corporation understands that when it built this treatment plant, it was an outer suburb. There was a lot of land everywhere. However, land is now in quite short supply, particularly in that area.

One of the key things put to me by aged-care providers and by the elderly people in the community is that those people want aged-care facilities close to where they currently live. They do not want aged-care facilities built 15 kilometres from where they live and where they have their networks. Here we have a proposal. We have proponents out there willing to build, but they are saying that that buffer is too big a hindrance in that it limits the size of the facility, and it also means that they would have to build right next to the fence line of adjoining residences, and of course those residents would have an issue with that.

As the member for Nollamara said, it is also to do with housing affordability. Let us talk about the cost effectiveness of this decision. An amount of \$1 million from the Water Corporation would help facilitate 100 new beds in that area. That is basically what we are saying. The Department of Housing is spending \$400 000 to build a house. In this area, \$1 million from government would help free up 100 beds throughout the community, and possibly free up homes. To me, that is a cost-effective way of increasing housing availability in the suburb. More generally, it will help seniors who have been sitting there, waiting for a home in Ballajura. The idea is that buffers have always existed and let them eat cake! Honestly! And that comes from government backbenchers. I can understand ministers being so detached from reality, but I cannot fathom it when the government’s own backbenchers are so detached from reality. We need a real solution to help people. If the member for Scarborough thinks it is funny to have seniors who do not have a home to live in, honestly, she is absolutely detached.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I wasn’t laughing at you; I was laughing at something I was reading. I do apologise if I offended you. I wasn’t laughing at you.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Obviously, the member should read that outside, because it sounded like she was laughing at seniors in my community.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: I wasn’t laughing at seniors in any community.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think the member obviously has a complete disregard for them.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: You should be less sensitive. I have apologised. Get over it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member has a complete disregard for them.

As I said, let us look at the cost effectiveness of this. An amount of \$1 million from government will give us 100 aged-care beds. To me, that is pretty cost effective. Not only in a moral sense, but also in a financial sense, it makes sense.

As I said, the minister might have been a good engineer, but, frankly, as a minister, he should sit down and try to achieve a public interest outcome, because he is not doing that. I know he is laughing and smiling, but he is not doing that. Honestly, the fact is that he just completely disregards it. If I were sitting in the minister’s shoes, I would be thinking, “Jeez, we should act on this. Jeez, why haven’t I acted on this?” I would be slightly embarrassed, but, honestly, you guys opposite have no shame on some issues, particularly this one! Whether the issue is about public utility charges or not giving homes to seniors, you guys opposite have no shame. I wanted to raise the issue with the minister again. I believe that \$1 million to help develop this facility would be a good outcome. These seniors have been waiting for years and years for this to happen and you guys have a complete disregard for seniors in the community. As I said, if I were in the minister’s position, I would be sitting there thinking, “I’m embarrassed; I want to try to sort this out.”

Mr D.A. Templeman: He looks embarrassed.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He looks embarrassed. The amount of \$1 million to help 100 seniors in Ballajura would be a good thing, I think. I hope the minister seriously considers this and takes a public interest and a wider community point of view. As a minister of the Crown, that is what he is there for. He is there to administer and take responsibility for his department’s portfolios, but he is part of a cabinet that is meant to take a wider view, including the public interest. If the government cannot take a public interest view or a wider community view, who is there to do that in the whole of government? Our departments and government trading enterprises take particular points of view. Ministers are appointed and paid to look at the wider public interest and to make decisions for the entire community, not simply to advance the cause of their agency or GTE. Frankly, they have CEOs and boards. The Water Corporation has a CEO and a board to advance its cause and the minister has to look after the wider public interest.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [1.11 pm]: I think within two weeks of being elected to this place I commented in this house about the Minister for Water, who was then the Minister for Housing, when I stated that he had no idea where Armadale was. Does the minister remember that? Obviously I was educated later about his close historical family connection to Armadale.

Mr W.R. Marmion: I know it very well.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I hope that later in my speech the minister pays keen attention to my comments about the Wungong urban water project. I will make some initial comments about the bills before us. In his second reading speech on the Water Services Bill 2011 the minister stated —

The purpose of the Water Services Bill 2011 is to consolidate and modernise existing water service legislation, which will make it clearer and easier to use, streamline regulatory processes and address gaps in current legislation. The bill will improve the ability of licensees to provide high-quality and efficient water services to their customers.

He stated also that the bill will introduce new customer protection mechanisms to the water service industry. They are, of course, very important aims. As the minister will know, water is essential to life. It is one of those necessities for survival. Therefore, the administration and supply of water to Western Australian communities, whether they be residential or business, is of paramount importance to any government. The responsibilities the minister has under this portfolio are immense. The explanatory memorandum states —

The objectives of the Bill are:

- To enable the Minister to make regulations and codes, set conditions and standards and determine charges for water services provision that protect customers and are fair to water service providers.

- To ensure the safety, reliability, efficiency and quality of water services are maintained by means of regulatory and licensing requirements.
- To enable an effective, competitive and sustainable water services industry that is responsive to the needs of all Western Australians.

I do not think those objectives can be argued against—of course they are important objectives. The issue, more importantly, is whether the administration of the minister’s department will achieve those objectives.

That brings me to a number of issues. I think I should start with the Wungong project. As the minister will recall, I was a member of the Armadale Redevelopment Authority, which was instrumental to the development of the Wungong urban water master plan. It was one of the key planks of our existence; in fact, the Armadale Redevelopment Authority was recognised for its work in the creation of the master plan when the Planning Institute of Australia awarded the project its highest accolade, which was the president’s award for excellence in planning. Wungong also won the evening’s only award for planning excellence within the category of environmental planning for conservation. It is surprising that, even though the work and quality attached to that master plan was recognised by the Planning Institute of Australia, the Water Corporation at the time—the member for Nedlands was not the minister—seemed to do everything it could to not assist the objectives and the desired outcome of the Wungong urban project. That is an incredible shame. The changes that have taken place under the Armadale Redevelopment Authority structure whereby it has become part of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority give me even less confidence. The minister may be able to bring me up to speed on where the Wungong urban water project is at. One of the major obstacles at the time I was on the Armadale Redevelopment Authority was the third pipe. Without the third pipe the whole objective of the Wungong urban water project could not be achieved. The attitude and lack of support from the Water Corporation was really disappointing. Of course it provided certain support, but not sufficient support. One of the things I feared with the establishment of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority—I recall the debate we had on that legislation to set up the MRA—was that Armadale would be neglected vis-a-vis East Perth, Midland, Subiaco and other areas. From what I am hearing, unfortunately those fears are being played out. I would very much like to hear in the minister’s response where the Wungong urban water project sits within his portfolio objectives and priorities. The Wungong urban water master plan was a very bold and ambitious, but necessary, step forward in trying to provide proper access to water and to preserve water. As we know, as we become a more arid environment and our population keeps increasing, the supply of water becomes even more important.

I commenced my speech by mentioning the importance of water in our life cycle, and we know that water has often been a determining factor in tensions between nations or groups. Obviously, in the Middle East the lack of water is the basis of some of the tensions between countries and intra countries. I return to the Wungong Urban Water Master Plan project, which, of course, is dear to my heart through my involvement with the Armadale Redevelopment Authority and now as the elected member for Armadale. I am sure it is of great interest also to the member for Darling Range. The policy statement in the master plan states —

The basis of the Utilities Policy is to achieve the vision set out in the Wungong Urban Water ... Master Plan for the orderly and timely provision of servicing infrastructure to facilitate the sustainable development of Wungong.

As the minister will know, the Wungong project was also in step with the whole issue of liveable neighbourhoods. The whole idea is to try to create a vibrant community that is also sustainable, so the idea of the Wungong urban water master plan was to ensure that there was an efficient location of utilities, while providing sufficient space to accommodate large canopy street trees in road reservations in accordance with the master plan movement network and the place codes. The whole idea was to ensure that we did not have a segregated community environment; we had a community where the homes were built in such a way that people would be compelled to speak to each other. It was to become a more dynamic, movable community to fit in with a more sustainable existence. This is where the Water Corporation was a great disappointment to the Armadale Redevelopment Authority, because under the master plan the idea was to accommodate the delivery of adequate, reliable, safe, efficient potable and non-potable supply of water in accordance with the objectives of the Wungong urban water district water management strategy. During my time at the ARA, that was not able to be achieved. I am not 100 per cent sure that there have been any significant developments. As I said, with the creation of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority, I now have even greater fears than I had before.

I was also visited in my office by a couple of employees from the Water Corporation; I think they were from the public relations section. I must say they were very professional. I compliment their willingness to come out to my office; they actually instigated the appointment. I thought that was something that should be applauded. I am not sure whose idea it was in the first place, but the more that departments seek to communicate with members of Parliament, I think, the better. They laid out the objectives of the Water Corporation. In many respects they

correspond to part of what the minister mentioned in his second reading speech. However, whereas the minister was talking about a legislative form to provide a new customer protection mechanism for the delivery of water, they were talking more about the need to have a better interaction with the public and also with members of Parliament, whereby many constituents who have issues with regard to water supplies can be attended to.

That was all positive. However, a more recent experience has not been positive. I refer to a constituent who lives in Armadale. A childcare centre is located on a property she has in ownership with her husband. The Water Corporation has made a ruling that, because the childcare centre may be providing meals to the children, there may be excessive wastage of grease and other oily products and therefore a certain filter in the water system needs to be installed. Unfortunately, the installation of this filter system will cost, I think, up to \$11 000—or even more. The owner who came to see me was adamant, though, that the childcare centre did not cook food or, if it did, it cooked a very minimal amount. The chance of excessive build-up of grease and oily discharge was minimal or irrelevant. I then telephoned the manager of the childcare centre to check. She reassured me that that was the case. We have written to the Water Corporation, which would not reverse its decision. We have sought to contact the Water Corporation to arrange a visit to the childcare centre to allow us all to find out for ourselves who is telling the truth. I am not sure what the situation is today, but I know at the end of last week one of my electorate officers sought to contact the relevant person from the Water Corporation for a number of days, and, unfortunately, we had not received a return call. I ask the minister to maybe look at the internal management of the Water Corporation. Although it is great to have public relations people from the corporation come out and speak to members of Parliament, that willingness falls flat when I seek an answer or to make contact with people in the Water Corporation and my calls or calls from my office are not returned.

Returning to the legislation, I note that other members have made comment on the various sections of the bill, and I do not feel the need to go over that now. Of course, during consideration in detail, those matters will no doubt be discussed. There is no doubt that the objectives are something that should be applauded in many respects. As the minister stated, the problem with the whole issue of water generally, water supply and so forth is that so many pieces of legislation are involved. That creates very cumbersome and often inconsistent and contrary objectives and approaches that are contrary to the objectives the minister seeks to achieve. Hopefully, the various provisions in the legislation before us will achieve the objectives set out in the minister’s second reading speech and explanatory memorandum. Whether that will be the case we will examine in consideration in detail.

I also urge the minister to revisit the whole issue of the Wungong urban water master plan. It is a great plan; it has great objectives. It will be a great new community that runs in conjunction with the liveable communities proposal and plans to have a dynamic, sustainable, environmentally clever community whereby, with our depleting water supplies and an increase in population, we can work together to try to alleviate those problems. As the responsible minister knows, the need for us to be very clever in how we receive and use our water supplies must be of utmost importance in his priorities. With those concluding comments, I will sit down.

MR A.P. O’GORMAN (Joondalup) [1.28 pm]: I rise to make a small contribution to this debate on the Water Services Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill and the Water Services Bill. As many members will know, the electorate of Joondalup sits primarily on the Gngangara water mound. An issue in this state for many, many years has been the drawdown taken from the mound. We seem to be taking more and more, and we are starting to see the results of that in and around Yanchep with the drying of the lakes, the drying out in the caves and the other environmental damage up there.

Under the previous government, a trial program of reinjection of water at the Beenyup waste water treatment plant was started. My understanding is that that has been running now for quite a number of years, although fully operational for only one year. It has been injecting back into the mound, and has been very successful. I understand that that trial finishes in December this year, and that following that trial it is anticipated it will be expanded to increase the number of points at which water is reinjected back into the mound, which hopefully will assist with the drying out that we are seeing in our lakes. I can see Lake Joondalup from my house. At the moment it is pretty dry. It has been happening like that for quite a number of years—but not always. I can remember about 20 or 25 years ago Joondalup Lake seldom, if ever, dried up, except on an exceptionally dry year. I am wondering whether this Water Services Bill will incorporate an assurance that money will be put up to put those reinjection points back into the mound from the Beenyup plant. We know it is successful. I know the government is proud of that fact. The opposition is proud of it also. School tours go through there just about on a daily basis. I think it is just a matter now of actually getting on and doing the job, because the water will eventually come back into the aquifer and eventually be re-used. But I think it will be quite a number of years down the track before that water gets back into the system.

My electorate has a number of organisations and development areas, one of which is the southern business district. The Minister for Transport was up there not too long ago re-releasing, with great fanfare, the release that was done under our government. The roads have now gone in, and I understand Bunnings and Masters to be two of the main purchasers of the land, so there will be a couple of big hardware warehouse developments up there.

We already have the Motor Industry Training Association, which finished the construction of its building and moved in in February of last year. Prior to moving in, it sought from the Water Corporation a licence to put a bore in so that it could have water in and around its facility. Primarily, it was seeking to have a water-sustainable landscape, but it needed some water to start it off. It could not acquire a licence; it could not even purchase a licence from either of the local governments or any of the big water licence holders in that area. It is vitally important that we get some more water into the system so that organisations like MITA, which provides training to our young mechanics and tradespeople for the automotive industry and heavy duty industry, can function. It is a great organisation to have, but unfortunately it cannot get water for its landscaping. We will see that get worse. Joondalup is almost inner city, if you like, and it is a shame that we cannot get groundwater supply within the City of Joondalup, which is so close to the Beenyup reinjection trial.

Further up from that we have the Flynn Drive industrial area, where, again, one of the big issues is water supply. Power stations are scheduled to go in there, and of course they will need a significant amount of water. It is vitally important that we start looking at maybe bringing the Beenyup reinjection on a lot quicker, or, if not, piping it directly to some of those areas.

For the past 25 years, to my knowledge, Beenyup waste water treatment plant has had a problem. I have lived up that way for 30 years and it was there when I moved up there. It has been called the “Padbury Pong” and the “Craigie Stink”; it has had all sorts of different names over the years. Governments of both persuasions have spent tens of millions of dollars trying to rectify it. About 25 years ago the local government—the City of Wanneroo as it was—reduced the buffer around the plant. On one side is the Mitchell Freeway, and across the other side of the Mitchell Freeway there is an environmentally protected area. Just south of that is Woodvale, and the residents of Woodvale, who have been there probably 15 or maybe 20 years, are getting some very bad smells from Beenyup waste water treatment plant. The people in Craigie and Padbury had it previously, and the tens of millions of dollars worth of work seems to have reduced it. But at the last community reference group meeting I attended we were told of a small-diameter pipe with a relatively long run that has now sprung some leaks from which gas is escaping, resulting in, once again, the smell. It is affecting, primarily, people in Woodvale, in the member for Kingsley’s electorate, and across the freeway, rather than on the Craigie side. People on the Craigie side are either very used to it and just wave it away now, or the prevailing wind when the leak is happening is pushing it inland towards the east.

That issue has arisen because the buffer was withdrawn. There is housing development right up to the boundary fence of the Beenyup waste water treatment plant. It was put to me by the Water Corporation some years ago that the only way this could be resolved was to buy back the land and put the buffer zone back in. I estimate that there are between 300 and 500 houses in that area, and those people would have to be moved out, rehoused and compensated. But when I talk to people in that area, many of whom are elderly, they say they have lived there for so long that they do not want to be rehoused in Brighton or Butler or Quinns Rock or anywhere further out. They are, and have been for a long time, residents of Craigie, and that is where they would like to stay. If it was to go ahead, the rehousing of those residents would need to be done in proximity to where they are at the moment. As I said, most of them are seniors and they have built up their networks and connections in and around that area. If the capacity of that plant has to increase again, bringing with it the additional risks of odours escaping, the rehousing of those people may need to be considered in the future.

There are a couple of places where they could be rehoused. The Craigie Senior High School site has still not been redeveloped, although the structure plan has gone through. The merger of Camberwarra Primary School and Craigie Primary School, which resulted in Craigie Heights Primary School, has left another school site free. The school has been closed, the buildings have been demolished, and it is ready to move those people there. It is outside the 500-metre exclusion zone or buffer zone around the plant, so it is an ideal place to relocate those people. They would be on government land, it would be done with government money, and they would be in their own area so that they can maintain their networks. I hope that could be done in the future, minister.

In relation to the leaking pipe I mentioned, at the moment the maintenance people are packing around it and insulating it with an epoxy, which will reduce the smell, but the true and only way to fix it will be to replace the entire length of pipework and have it upgraded and renewed at a cost of about \$400 000. We are being told that the maintenance people have to compete with other areas of the Water Corporation to get that money as a capital expenditure, which seems ludicrous to me. My background is in maintenance and facilities management, and a

percentage of the capital cost of the building should always be allocated as the budget for maintenance. It seems crazy to me that over the past 20 years about \$165 million has been spent upgrading Beenyup waste water treatment plant, yet \$400 000 cannot be found to do vital maintenance so that \$165 million of work is not wasted because of one small pipe. I hope that the Water Services Bill 2011 will tackle some of those issues.

As to aesthetics, I have to give credit to Water Corp; if it removes indigenous plants from areas, it replants them and makes it look very nice. How can a sewage treatment plant look nice? It can be hidden in amongst trees. Water Corp has done that very well over many, many years. I get very little complaint about how it looks, but I know the member for Kingsley has had the same complaints I get, because I think about three months ago she grieved in this place about the “Craigie Pong” that wafted over to Woodvale. I can reassure the residents of Woodvale that what they have now is not much compared with what used to happen in Craigie. People could not go outside in Craigie; they could not have a barbecue. Sometimes residents actually left their premises and stayed at a relative’s house because it was that bad. It is not that bad now, but, again, lots and lots of money has been spent on upgrading that by both parties when in government, and it seems a shame that we are going to start getting complaints again because of not having \$400 000 to replace an old piece of pipework that badly needs replacing. I cannot understand why it is so difficult for us to move from the stage that we are at to the next stage of reinjecting water and other fluids on a large scale. I have seen the water and I have smelt it. I have not tasted the water directly from there, but it looks better when it comes out of the treatment plant than out of my tap! I can tell members that sometimes I get some very pungent smells from the tap in my house at Joondalup, and I wonder what the Water Corporation is putting into our water supply because it has a really strong taste. I had a visit from two young women from the Water Corporation’s public relations section who talked to me about various issues. I pointed this out to them and they were going to come back to me with an explanation, but unfortunately they have not managed to get back to me on that yet.

The Water Services Bill will start to bring together all those different agencies that are providing water in the state—Busselton Water and Albany Water, to mention a few. I hope that the government is bringing those organisations together with a view to delivering to the public of Western Australia better services and it is not so that they can be privatised and outsourced at a later stage. There are certain things that the state government must provide, and water and sewage removal are among those things. They have to stay in the hands of the state so that we can make sure standards are maintained; and if standards are not maintained, there can be no pointing the finger at somebody else saying, “It’s their fault!” It is down to government and to the Water Corporation to make sure those standards are maintained.

With those few words, I conclude my remarks.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [1.42 pm]: I want to canvass two aspects of the Water Services Bill 2011. The first relates to water security in the northern suburbs, and I concur with the remarks of my colleague the member for Joondalup in that regard. The second relates to fire hydrants and the recommendations of the Keelty inquiry. The member for Joondalup raised a very important point: until we have some level of water security for the northern suburbs, employment drivers and industry will be at a standstill. We need to clarify the position with the regular security of water supply and the issuing of licences in the northern suburbs. That has, if members will excuse the pun, flow-on effects. For example, in the course of discussion about traffic congestion we need to consider the requirement for stronger concentrations of local employment in the northern suburbs, so that the Mitchell Freeway does not permanently become the car park that it so frequently is. That can be done only if we have some clarity on an ongoing water supply. If people are investing in business and industry and employing people, they need to understand what the future water demands and supply will be in the area.

I particularly want to refer to the Gnangara sustainability strategy, which was released almost three years ago in July 2009. It was a draft strategy. We are still waiting for the final strategy—it is about time! Whatever consultation needs to be done as a result of that strategy is becoming increasingly urgent and needs to be finalised so that we can have some certainty. That draft strategy recommended that the take from the mound should be reduced to about 110 gigalitres. Currently, it is running at 163 gigalitres. The current supply out of the mound is becoming increasingly unsustainable. I would certainly like to hear the minister’s comments on when we can expect the draft Gnangara sustainability strategy to be finalised and released publicly.

The second matter I want to raise is referred to in clause 97 and in following clauses—fire hydrants. This legislation is a wasted opportunity. In June 2011 the government received the first Keelty report, “A Shared Responsibility: The Report of the Perth Hills Bushfire February 2011 Review” and there were certain recommendations on fire hydrants. This bill would have been the perfect legislative opportunity to enact and implement those recommendations; however, the government has failed to do so. Recommendation 50 of the Keelty report said that the state government should transfer responsibility for the installation, removal and maintenance of fire hydrants to the Water Corporation in accordance with the recommendations of the 2006

Community Development and Justice Standing Committee inquiry into fire and emergency services legislation. Recommendation 51 was —

The Water Corporation immediately review the outstanding orders for hydrant repairs and develop strategies to reduce the backlog.

I made inquiries about what stage the implementation of the recommendations had reached. Yesterday I received a response to question on notice 7405. I asked the Minister for Water —

I refer to recommendation 50 in the Keelty report that the responsibility for maintenance installation of fire hydrants be transferred from Fire and Emergency Services Authority to Watercorp, and I ask:

- (a) has this recommendation been implemented;
- (b) if not, why not; and
- (c) what is the current maintenance backlog for hydrants?

The minister replied —

- (a)–(b) The Government is currently working to implement Keelty recommendations.

That is the extent of the answer I received on that inquiry. To continue —

- (c) As of 8 March 2012, there are 354 outstanding work orders, representing 0.51% of the total number of hydrants.

As of yesterday, according to the minister, that is the stage that the implementation of the Keelty recommendations is at. I am somewhat concerned about the inaction. I am aware from some briefing notes that I obtained through freedom of information legislation that legal issues relating to the transfer of hydrant ownership were seen as significant and needed to be finalised. I understand the government has had advice from the State Solicitor’s Office on those transfer issues and that it is considering that advice. I will repeat some of the Keelty recommendations. This bill would have been a perfect occasion to act on those recommendations.

Keelty found that there were 68 000 fire hydrants in Western Australia, of which 61 000 are owned by FESA and 7 000 by approximately 100 local governments. The responsibility for servicing and maintaining the hydrants is split between FESA, local government and the Water Corporation. FESA and local governments, as the owners of the hydrants, are responsible for servicing the hydrants, and in FESA’s case this is done by firefighters conducting annual checks. In some cases this is done by volunteers. FESA contracts the Water Corporation to carry out repairs that have been detected through these inspections. Mr Keelty quoted the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee inquiry into Fire and Emergency Services Authority legislation in 2006, saying that the inquiry found that the ownership and management arrangements into fire hydrants in WA were unnecessarily complex and inappropriate. That inquiry recommended that the responsibility for the installation, removal, maintenance and all associated costs therein of fire hydrants should rest with the water supply authority responsible for servicing the areas in which the hydrants reside. It also recommended that FESA and local government should retain their responsibilities for the maintenance and servicing of fire hydrants in their respective areas. Mr Keelty found that the complexities of fire hydrant ownership, maintenance and repairs remain unresolved. FESA told the Keelty inquiry that it had tried to transfer ownership of fire hydrants to WA water providers but had been unsuccessful and, further, that FESA had raised concerns about a backlog in completing repairs to hydrants, which it had identified. I am pleased to say that according to the minister’s answer, that backlog is at least down to 354 work orders, but at the time the Keelty report was released there were 1 000 outstanding work orders and based on the current completion rate of 150 hydrant maintenance jobs per month the Water Corporation estimated that it would take 12 months to complete the backlog. Therefore, I congratulate the Water Corporation for at least getting it down to a two-month delay.

Keelty further recognised that the state’s water supply represented critical infrastructure and, accordingly, had to be protected. He noted the tension between the need to restrict access in the current security environment and the need to ensure that repairs and maintenance of fire hydrants were completed promptly. He noted that although firefighters depend on access to fully operational fire hydrants, security concerns meant that it would not be appropriate for FESA or local governments to directly contract or undertake repairs to hydrants and he said that the current arrangements were very costly, created overheads and double handling by agencies. Currently, the Water Corporation charges FESA and local government a 17 per cent management fee to undertake repairs on their behalf, and FESA indicated to the inquiry that it had paid approximately \$400 000 in management fees in the past two years and provided examples of duplicate or multiple invoices being issued by Water Corp for the same job, with these invoices subsequently being paid by FESA. He was particularly concerned with a description on an invoice for \$175 000 issued in error and subsequently paid. These are the sorts of anomalies

that led to Mr Keelty making his recommendation. I observe that this would have been a particularly opportune time for that to be clarified; this legislation could have made amendments to the Fire Brigades Act, which addresses current ownership issues. I would be interested to hear the minister’s response to that because it would have enabled the position to be clarified well in advance of the next fire season. It is unfortunate that this is now a lost opportunity.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Minister for Water) [1.53 pm] — in reply: Going back to October and including those who spoke this morning, I thank all those members who have contributed to the debate on the Water Services Bill 2011 and the Water Services Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2011. In the short time that I have, I will deal with this morning’s contributions, which are fresh in my mind, in responding to some of the comments made. Many of those comments will be picked up in some of my further comments.

In terms of the comments made by the member for Cannington—he is not in the house at the moment—his main point acknowledged some local issues and he made some points about water supply. As I will emphasise in reply to some of the other comments, the bills that we are talking about are a consolidation of existing bills and all the issues currently underway will still be addressed in the normal course of business with some additional benefits; therefore, I do not intend to respond to the member for Cannington’s main comment about infrastructure and water from the Kimberley, although I acknowledge many of the points that he made.

Similarly, the member for West Swan made some comments about water supply from the north and she suggested that she supports this government’s desalination supply approach. We acknowledge that the previous government instigated the Kwinana desalination plant, albeit there is some conjecture on who the first member of Parliament was to speak in support of desalination. The member for West Swan has suggested that former Premier Dr Geoff Gallop was a strong supporter, and we do not deny that, but I will put in a plug for now Deputy Premier Kim Hames who, every time I have lunch with him, points out that he was the first Minister for Water to push for desalination and therefore also needs, I think, some acknowledgement.

The member for West Swan also regenerated the issue about the Mirrabooka waste water treatment plant buffer and that has been addressed; if there is anything further to progress on that, it can be done in the normal course of Water Corporation business.

The member for Armadale supports the legislation, and sees the benefits of the objectives of both bills and the consolidation of the legislation. He also raised the local issue of an urban renewal water project. I have some notes indicating that is still progressing. It is a fairly costly venture and options, including the financial viability, are being looked at and that will be followed through. The member for Armadale supports the legislation and I thank him for that.

The member for Joondalup raised issues about water supply in his electorate because of the Gngangara mound. He fully supports the re-injection of Beenyup. I can say that the re-injection of water at Beenyup will assist the Gngangara mound but that other action is also being taken to assist the issue of Gngangara mound. Firstly, because of the desalination plant coming on-stream, we will be able to draw less water from Gngangara mound in the future and the future water taken from Gngangara mound will be taken from the deeper aquifers. I note that the member for Gosnells is very interested in this. The drawings from the superficial aquifers will be scaled down so that hopefully in 10 years we will not be drawing any water from the superficial aquifers. As well as taking less water from the Gngangara mound, we will take water from the Leederville and Yarragadee deeper, confined aquifers, rather than the superficial aquifer. This, combined with the desalination plant and the recharging of the aquifer by the re-injection of the water at Beenyup, forms a three-pronged approach that will see us achieve a sustainable yield of about 110 gegalitres per annum as a sustainable draw from the Gngangara mound.

The member for Girrawheen also raised the water security issue that I have just addressed. The member for Gosnells was paying attention and he will be able to point out what I have said. However, we have a three-pronged approach and we will draw less from the superficial aquifers; therefore future Water Corporation drawings from Gngangara mound will be from the deeper Leederville and Yarragadee aquifers. The recharging will assist and because we have more water from desalination, there will be less need to draw on the Gngangara mound.

On the issue of fire hydrants, the amendments that I will move during the consideration in detail stage, which appear on the notice paper, will fully address Keelty recommendation 50. That will be another tick in terms of the Keelty report.

The member is right that a considerable number of fire hydrants have to be maintained, and with the licensees now being responsible, it should be a much smoother process.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 2 May 2012]

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Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Bill Marmion; Speaker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Acting Speaker; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Ms Margaret Quirk

I thank the members who spoke on the bill this morning. I now turn to those comments made by members who spoke in October last year. For that I will need to refer to the detailed notes that I took and that were typed up over the Christmas break.

Most speakers recognised that good management of water is fundamental to Western Australia’s prosperity. In fact, the member for Cannington this morning mentioned the importance of water supply to Kalgoorlie.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2161.]