

WATER LICENCE FEES

2092. Mr P.D. Omodei to the Minister for Water Resources

The Department of Water Resources has recommended that new water licence administration fees of \$200 to \$3,000 should apply annually to 18,700 water licenses in Western Australia from 1 July 2007, and I ask -

- (1) Given the new water licence administration fees are intended to recover the costs associated with licence renewals, checking compliance with licence conditions, maintaining licensing databases, management of appeals and community awareness, for the \$600 annual licence fee for a 50 megalitre water licence, can the Minister advise what proportion and value of the licence fee will be applied to -
 - (a) licence renewal;
 - (b) checking compliance with licence conditions;
 - (c) maintaining licensing databases;
 - (d) management of appeals; and
 - (e) community awareness?
- (2) Given the Government can issue or renew a Drivers licence for 5 years for \$111, or \$22.20 a year, will the Minister explain why the Department of Water Resources is seeking 9 to 54 times that amount for a water licence?
- (3) Will the Minister explain why the fee for a water licence includes the costs of management of appeals when appeals against decisions of the Department of Water Resources are required to be dealt with by the State Administrative Tribunal in accordance with their schedule of fees for appellants?
- (4) Is it appropriate that the Department of Water Resources expects all water licence applicants or holders to meet the cost of the Department's response to appeals against the Department's decisions?
- (5) Will the Minister explain why water licence holders will have to meet the cost of Government community awareness programs, especially when promotional expenditures are discretionary by Government and are often political in nature?
- (6) Will the Minister itemise which community awareness programs running in 2006-2007, and continuing or proposed for 2007-2008, that the Department of Water will expect water licenses holders to fund from water licence fees to be collected from 1 July 2007?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

- (1) The effort required for each of the functions undertaken in administering water licences will vary from year to year as demands dictate, and are dependent on the complexity of the licensing situation. In the initial calculations within the discussion papers attached to the State Water Strategy Water Reform Program, the proportion for the administrative functions were as follows:
 - (a) licensing and renewal is 71%.
 - (b) checking compliance with licence conditions is 14%.
 - (c) maintaining licensing database is 7%.
 - (d) management of appeals is 4%.
 - (e) community awareness is 4%.
- (2) The range of processes applied in administering a water licence are complex and exhaustive and are not undertaken in the manner of a straight forward issue of a drivers licence. These water licensing activities are directly related to the creation and protection of water users' valuable entitlements. Therefore, the cost of administering a water licence is greater. (Please see note below).
- (3) The Government considers that the management of appeals by the Department of Water is a function of administering water licences and is a cost incurred over and above that applied by the State Administrative Tribunal in its schedule of fees.
- (4) Answered in Question 3.
- (5) The community awareness program includes the management and support of community based water resource advisory committees along with some promotional and educational material specific to licensed water users. It is, therefore, appropriate that the water licence holders contribute to this cost.

- (6) The major expenditure of the community awareness program for 2006-2007 and ongoing through 2007-2008 is the management and support of 10 Water Resources Advisory Committees. The budget for this expenditure for 2007-2008 is not yet finalised. As the promotional and educational material is a minor component the exact breakdown of cost is not available.