

“A BLUEPRINT FOR WATER REFORM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA” - GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**27. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Water Resources:**

In light of the government’s response to the document “A Blueprint for Water Reform in Western Australia” and the subsequent decision to apply fees to all section 5 licence holders and charge for supplying, installing and maintaining water meters -

- (1) Why is the government insisting on metering licence holders who have contained systems such as in-stream farm dams?
- (2) Will the minister assure farmers who have had their water supplies metered that they will not be overburdened with yet another layer of bureaucracy that puts their viability in jeopardy?
- (3) Prior to applying fees, what weight did the government give to the significant cost of infrastructure already invested by landholders in water licence areas?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) The Department of Water has advised that where water licensing occurs, it is done so to manage water in a whole catchment. Dam holders in certain areas of the state need a licence to insure their own security and to prevent others in the catchment from taking water that may adversely impact on water availability. Metering is therefore needed to monitor water use and availability at a catchment scale, and will also have benefits for individual users as it will assist them to better understand this vital input to their agricultural businesses. Metering will be done as efficiently as possible.

The government recognises that many private irrigators and other water users have funded their own infrastructure; however, it is appropriate that licence holders bear the cost of administering water licences. Water users derive significant benefit from the use of the water resource, which requires ongoing planning and management by the state. Perpetual water entitlements and longer-term water licences will provide greater certainty on which water users can make financial decisions. Water entitlements will confer valuable rights to an asset used for primarily commercial activities.