

WATER LICENCE FEES

131. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Water Resources:

On 29 March on ABC radio in the south west, the minister said that the new water licence fees to be introduced from July 2007 would be an infinitesimal cost for farming businesses with a million dollar turnover.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that the \$600, \$1 200 and \$1 800 water licence fees that are to be paid annually by the majority of water licence holders in Manjimup and Pemberton are, in the minister's view, an infinitesimal cost?
- (2) How many of the 500 water licence holders in Manjimup and Pemberton does the minister believe have an annual million dollar turnover from those farms, which are generally family farms?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

- (1)-(2) I thank the member for the question. Some time back he was urging us very strongly to sign up to the National Water Initiative. He was berating the government because it was looking to protect the interests of Western Australia. Clearly, we are required under the national water agreement to introduce administrative fees.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It seems that the Leader of the Opposition is a real flip-flopper. He flips and he flops and he flips and he flops. He was arguing that we should go full bore on the National Water Initiative. We signed up to it after we took time to ensure that the interests of Western Australians would be protected. Since we have started to do those things that are required under the National Water Initiative, we have found the Leader of the Opposition back-peddalling very fast. The fact is that, after holding several rounds of very wide consultation right across the state, we have announced that administration fees will be introduced for people who are using water for industrial and farming production purposes. It is very clear that this process will not apply to farm dams when the water will be used either for domestic purposes or for stock. Farmers have been urging me to take action because they have had to rely on a source of water, such as a stream or a dam, and other people have intercepted the flow and cut off their water. This is about implementing a proper licensing process so that there will be a guaranteed security of supply of water and one user will not intercept the water supply of someone else. To put in place that level of licensing and monitoring, it is appropriate, as required under the NWI, that fees be paid for those licences. We are keeping those fees as light as possible so that small water users will pay only a small annual fee to help protect the water they need for their enterprises.