

WATER SUPPLIES - COLLIE-WELLINGTON BASIN

**284. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Water Resources:**

I refer to the report entitled "Water source options in the Collie-Wellington Basin" that was tabled today. Does the report give viable options for Wellington Dam water to be used to augment the water supply to the integrated water supply system?

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:**

I thank the member for his question; clearly, it is an issue of vital interest to his constituents in Collie-Wellington. The report provides clear advice on how we can go forward and maximise our use of water from the Collie basin and Wellington Dam. I thank Ross Kelly and the other members of the committee who put this report together for us. It provides a range of options, with some indicative costs for what we would have to commit to get water through various means. They all show that it will be some time before we can do them. The actual figures do not include some of the other costs. They are mentioned in the report, but the headline figures do not give them. The report indicates that from 2001, the average stream flow into Wellington dam has been only 74 gegalitres. While the dam was generally thought to produce about 100 gegalitres a year, since 2001 it has produced only 74 gegalitres, of which 68 gegalitres are already allocated to irrigators. The irrigators are open to potential trading because they are very progressive, and of the 74 gegalitres currently flowing in, 68 are allocated, so only six gegalitres are potentially available. However, we can free up more by negotiating with the irrigators. In considering how that can be produced, we need to look at the needs of industry. That too is clearly set out in the report, particularly concerning power generation, and the water those involved will need from the Collie basin to make sure they can expand their generating capacity. We also need to look at the diversion of saline water into the mine void. There are recommendations in here also for how we can make that sustainable and part of the way in which we capture water. It gives us a very important building block. I have asked the Department of Water to make sure we carry forward these recommendations, and to move as quickly as possible to see whether parts of the scheme can be put in place. We need to consider certain parts of it, such as whether it is the extra water reliability that the power industry needs, or the supply of water into Harris Dam through to the south west, either through a minor desalination plant or through the use of mine dewatering. There are a range of options, and we want to take them forward.

This might be an opportunity for a turning point for members opposite, who still think they can bring water down from the Kimberley - an absolute nonsense with current technology and the cost of carrying water over that distance. They should use the details in this report to get some understanding of the issue. Their other rather phoney idea that they can take the water straight out of Wellington Dam, shandy it with water from Serpentine and the other dams and overcome the problems of bromide and salinity is not as simple as it seems. The cost of piping water up to Serpentine Dam and -

**Dr S.C. Thomas:** You have bromide issues in the seawater you are desalinating.

**Mr J.C. KOBELKE:** Again, it is absolute nonsense from the opposition. In an answer to a question on notice from the member for Capel I pointed out how much bromide is in seawater. It is something like one hundredth less than in the Wellington Dam. As the report indicates, the amount of bromide is three times world health standards. In seawater there is something like one per cent, and the member for Capel thinks it is an issue. The member for Capel should try to deal with the facts, not fantasies; he might then find he has some credibility. The Liberal opposition, which is still touting that we bring water from the Kimberley, has a pie-in-the-sky view that water can be shandied with water from other reservoirs where there may not even be water in this drying climate and that this might be a fix for the real challenges we face. This government is about dealing with the challenges and providing greater security of water. We have a track record to prove that we can deliver.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I have a little piece of advice. I will allow one question at a time, not several. If members wish to seek to interject, they might try it in a parliamentary way. Even then, it is question time, and it might not be allowed. I will not allow a dull roar to come to me from the left of this house.