

AGRITECH SMARTWATER AND SOUTHERN CROSS WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE
CORPORATION PTY LTD

243. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

Given that the government has made a decision to build a second 45-gigalitre desalination plant at Binningup at a cost of \$1 billion -

- (1) Will the government now investigate the Agritech Smartwater project and its offer to build, own and operate a 45-gigalitre a year reverse osmosis plant using water from Wellington Dam and to sell it to the Water Corporation at 65c a kilolitre?
- (2) Will the government support a proposal submitted by Southern Cross Water and Infrastructure Corporation Pty Ltd to proceed with an Environmental Protection Authority impact study on its proposal to allow construction of a dam on the Brunswick River; and, if not, why not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

(1)-(2) I am not familiar with the second proposal, but I hesitate at the possibility of building another dam. Did the Leader of the Opposition say "build a dam on the Brunswick River"? He supports that, does he?

Mr P.D. Omodei: Not necessarily. I am asking you whether you will investigate that.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thought I just heard some commentary; intrinsic in the question I thought I heard a suggestion that that was a good proposition.

Mr P.D. Omodei: No, I said, "Will you investigate it?"

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: So, it is okay to dam the Fitzroy River, according to the Leader of the Opposition, but why put a proposition to me that we should investigate the damming of the Brunswick River if he is not even prepared to say it is worth considering?

Mr P.D. Omodei: It is on one of the Water Corporation's lists.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition knows that from his time -

Mr P.D. Omodei: Why is it on the Water Corporation's list?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not think there is much to be gained by damming more rivers in the south west. I think the question tends to indicate that the Leader of the Opposition has not cottoned on to what is happening. It has stopped raining in the south west of Western Australia. The rain no longer falls from the sky in sufficient quantities to fill the dams to fill the pipes to fill the cups for people to drink. Something quite profound has happened in the south west of Western Australia. It has stopped raining to the extent that it used to rain when we got 90 per cent of our drinking water from the dams. There is not much point in building more dams if it does not rain. The only way we can fill them is to pump water into them from another source - groundwater or the desalination project. I think, and I might have misread the reaction, the overwhelming majority of people strongly support what we have done in announcing the desalination project. I think so; it is possible I have misread it but we will find out.

In relation to the Wellington Dam option, the Water Corporation will continue to have discussions and investigate with possible proponents. I hope the Leader of the Opposition is not pushing a private business venture here. Is he?

Mr P.D. Omodei: Are you having a feasibility study into private water or not?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I hope the Leader of the Opposition is not using his parliamentary position to promote a particular private venture. Is he?

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does the Leader of the Opposition have any relationship or connection with the proponents?

Mr P.D. Omodei: It is unbecoming of you, Premier.

Mr T. Buswell: Did you ever use your parliamentary position to do anything like that?

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The analysis of the Wellington Dam option will go on. The Water Corporation's advice to me -

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Water Corporation's advice to me was that the Wellington Dam option was a viable option, but 2015 was as early as it was likely to be before that could be brought on stream, for a variety of reasons - primarily, of course, the water quality -

Mr M.J. Birney: That is the private business option.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Kalgoorlie!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: - the presence of other chemicals in the water and human and other activity in the catchment area, which would make an earlier date for tapping that water unviable. It is under consideration by the Water Corporation.