

WATER FUNDING FROM COMMONWEALTH

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

Will the minister inform the house about the first announcement in this election campaign by the Howard government on water funding, which will impact directly on a Western Australian water project?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for his question and for his keen interest in water, particularly in his electorate, where it is vital. I was very pleased, if not somewhat surprised, at the Howard government's announcement yesterday that it would provide \$5 million in funding towards the second stage of the Kwinana water reclamation plant. This has come in an election campaign in which there has been real interest in WA and a commitment of a large amount of money from the alternative Rudd Labor government - something like \$100 million - for water projects. For the first time the federal Liberal Party has indicated that it will offer some money to Western Australia. It is particularly interesting that the request for funding for the Kwinana water reclamation plant was lodged as part of the National Water Initiative. I received a letter back in March this year saying that it would not be funded by the commonwealth. Now we find that the federal Liberal Party has turned its interest to Western Australia because of the potential marginal seats here. Following on from the Rudd Labor team actually committing funding for the Kwinana water reclamation plant, we find suddenly at the death knell that there is a bit of interest from the Howard Liberals. It is a good thing to see a little interest, but their offer falls so far short that it really is a joke. They have talked all around Australia about the water trade at Harvey, yet they offered nothing for that very good project when we sought funding. Again, the Rudd Labor team is offering us \$40 million for that project. The list goes on and on. This really is the death throes of the current Liberal government seeking to curry some favour by trying to play catch-up. It is nothing more than that.