

SOUTH WEST YARRAGADEE - GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): Today I received a letter from the member for Stirling seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this house calls upon the state government to abandon its plans to pump 45 gigalitres of water from the south west Yarragadee to boost the integrated water supply scheme.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Stirling) [3.08 pm]: I move -

That this house calls upon the state government to abandon its plans to pump 45 gigalitres of water from the south west Yarragadee to boost the integrated water supply scheme.

Not too many weeks go by when we do not see in either *The Weekend Australian* or *The West Australian* significant comments on states that have serious issues with water resources. Of course, it has been a feature of the recent state election in Queensland, and obviously it will be a relatively serious issue in the coming elections in other states. It is my belief, and, indeed, the belief of the National Party, that water is integral to our survival. Therefore, it is an issue that we need to address, and address appropriately, when times are good, not when we are pushed up against a wall, which I believe is the case in some of the other states. It is very clear that global warming is an issue that is upon us. Temperatures are rising. Of course, the impact of that on water supplies is very serious. The security of water supply is a huge and growing problem, and it needs to be addressed in the context of global warming.

We have the opportunity to stem the flow of bad high-consumption policy - a matter that I will raise in this debate - while it is a relatively small problem. Certainly, I concur that Western Australia is faring quite well with water issues. I know that the minister has made a number of comments in that regard, and I guess he makes a comparison between the performance of Western Australia and some of the other states; yet, arguably, Western Australia does not perform very well on water recycling. I cite an article from *The West Australian* titled "Recycled water key to climate change", which reads -

... the Senate rural and regional affairs committee said in an interim report.

Although WA had reacted more promptly than other States to the realities of climate change, its record on recycling was poor.

The report commended WA for building a desalination plant that would supply 17 per cent of Perth's water needs. But WA's and Australia's record on using recycled water was very poor by international standards.

The same article, which I guess responds to the issue and impact of global warming, states -

Water Corporation chief executive Jim Gill told the committee that climate change in southern WA appeared to be more severe than anywhere else in the world. Dr Gill said a 21 per cent reduction in rainfall since 1974 had resulted in run-off being reduced to a third of its previous level. "There has been a phenomenal shift of climate and weather in the south of WA and there seems to be no other place that is drying quite as fast," he said.

We have water restrictions in Western Australia. However, it is clear that the message from the experts in this area is that we do not have a good record on water recycling. Two articles in *The West Australian* of Monday, 11 September, even report Al Gore's comments regarding his concerns about global warming, and the need for the world to address that issue.

The south west is clearly a hot spot. The government is looking very seriously at drawing a significant amount of water from that area. The current approach to dealing with water in this state is security through diversity. I have been to a couple of presentations by the Water Corporation, and, indeed, it has been reflected in the minister's comments - people will be familiar with some of these documents - that if we can get into a situation in which we have a raft of sources of water, that in itself will give us a measure of security. I argue that recycling is not a significant part of that security-through-diversity program. There are some minimal warm and fuzzy approaches regarding picking a washing machine or a dishwasher that has a low level of water use, but we need to look at real recycling in the community now while the state is in a sound position from the perspective of

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water. The minister has also referred to the aquifer recharge trialling. I believe that there is scope to get a response to that by 2009, and hence ascertain whether that will be able to play a bigger role in the recycling of water in this state.

My focus in this motion is on the south west Yarragadee. In the next 15 minutes or so, I will raise the concern I have about the potential impact that pumping water from the south west Yarragadee will have on the natural environment. Indeed, there is the potential for an underestimation of regional needs in taking 45 gigalitres of water from the south west Yarragadee and putting it into the integrated water supply system. The south west Yarragadee is viewed as one of the options to fit into the security-through-diversity approach. It concerns me that it is an easy target, because the experts will tell us that it is an aquifer with a lot of water sitting underneath the surface. It is an easy target because the water is relatively cheap to pump. There is no need to put an energy cost into it, as is the case with a desalination plant. There is no significant treatment attached to it; it is very high-quality water. Therefore, it is a very easy target. When we are paying, generally speaking, about a dollar a kilolitre for the consumption of water, it can be seen why an easy target whets the appetite of the Water Corporation.

A discussion document that went out for people to look at had a significant response from the community. As I understand it, 500 or 600 responses have come back. It is my understanding that the Water Corporation has responded to the submissions made by various groups. There have been a number of community meetings. There has been a significantly negative response from all but one of the shires within the region. It is clearly an issue sitting on the plate of people in the south west, and they have a huge concern with that proposal. I understand that, as well as the Water Corporation, the Environmental Protection Authority is considering those responses, and it will provide advice to the government on the responses made by various people and, indeed, the responses of the Water Corporation to those various submissions. From discussions with a few people from the Water Corporation, it is my understanding that it is the job of the EPA to make a recommendation, it is the job of the Department of Water to also make a recommendation, and it is the job of an independent sustainability panel to make a recommendation to the government. The government is faced with making a decision at the end of this year. No doubt it has a lot of information to wade through. Obviously, there are strong concerns, particularly of people who come from that region.

The cost of the Yarragadee option will be, as close as I can get a figure for it - this came from an answer to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition in the estimates committee hearings - \$610 million, which includes the cost of integrating that water into the integrated water supply scheme. That is a significant figure. It is nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars. It is \$300 for every person - man, woman and child - in Western Australia, or \$1 200 for a family of four. Clearly, the benefit will be 45 gigalitres to the population of the metropolitan area. These funds could arguably be put into significant recycling projects, such as recycling of alternative water sources and maybe - I hope to have some time to reflect on this in a little while - recycling into industry, which has been raised in a number of circumstances in the eastern states, where I believe people are looking much more seriously, arguably out of necessity, at options to reduce their consumption of water.

I intend to cover two areas. One is environmental impacts. The statements to which I will refer come from the very report that was produced by the Water Corporation titled "South West Yarragadee Water Supply Development: Sustainability Evaluation/Environmental Review & Management Programme: Executive Summary". It is quite a comprehensive document, if members want to go through all its volumes. However, I will pick out some points regarding how the report describes the potential impact on the environment of drawing 45 gigalitres of water from the south west Yarragadee. First, it states that water levels in existing wells on the Swan and Scott coastal plains will drop by up to three metres. Second, the seawater interface at Bunbury, where the aquifer flows into the sea, will move up to 400 metres inland, affecting bores within one kilometre of the coast. Third, the summer flow of the Blackwood River will drop 13 per cent in dry years, causing a 14 per cent increase in salinity in the river during January and February. Fourth, the watertable will drop up to five metres in the Milyeannup Brook and Poison Gully valleys. Fifth, the watertable will drop up to two metres in the St John Brook valley. Sixth, the watertable will drop up to 50 centimetres in the Rosa Brook valley after 30 years of pumping, and these drops will cause vegetation changes over nearly 1 000 hectares. Seventh, the summer flow in Poison Gully and Milyeannup Brook will drop 30 per cent, and areas of the creek will stop flowing, forcing fish, including rare species, into the lower reaches. The Water Corporation will supplement flow by building a well nearby in the upper part of the Yarragadee formation.

Some of the points made in these reports refer to an approach to mitigate some of the concerns that have been raised. That in itself raises an issue. We are proposing to pump 45 gigalitres, creating a whole raft of potential impacts on the environment, and then saying that we have some mitigating positions that we can take to fix it up. That is arguably not a very good approach. The watertable on the Scott and Swan coastal plains will fall up to two metres after 30 years of pumping. The watertable around Lakes Jasper and Quitjup will decrease 10 to 25 centimetres after 30 years of pumping. These are the environmental impacts put forward in their report by the

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very people who want to pump out 45 gegalitres. That will be as good as it gets as far as the environment is concerned. If an independent view of that is taken, arguably it would be much more damning. That is very significant.

Another area of concern is the estimation of what will be the actual regional needs of the south west. There has been unprecedented growth in the area. I have not looked at the growth figures because the ones we have are fairly old. However, I have had a look at the voting patterns published by the Electoral Commission. Some of the electorates in the south west have had a 25 per cent jump in voters - aside from the issues of agriculture and the other water-use groups in that region.

Regional growth is a serious concern. People who live in that area and who are passionate about its growth and development will be passionate about securing a water source into the future for that area. The southern Perth basin presently uses 74 gegalitres a year locally, half of which comes from the Yarragadee. The recharge pattern for the southern Perth basin is 374 gegalitres a year, with 151 gegalitres a year to the Yarragadee. The report refers to the growth estimates in the area and the potential consumption of 175 gegalitres a year by 2033. That figure of 175 gegalitres a year, which does not include the 45 gegalitres a year that will potentially be pumped to Perth, is above the recharge figure that has been cited by the minister in a letter to the Nannup shire and is above the recharge figure for the south west Yarragadee. Perhaps the minister could comment on that later on. If those numbers are accurate, and I am reading it correctly, that is not sustainable. It was responded to today to some extent in the question I asked about the pressures from the National Water Initiative. I support the minister's approach when he said that it is important to monitor water. Water is a public resource. We need to know exactly where it is going and what it is doing. I am dead against charging farmers for water in their dams, and it was pleasing to hear the minister's response, and I will hold him to that if there is any move in that regard in the future. We certainly recognise the need to monitor water. I support the National Water Initiative, but we can cite only examples from the eastern states, where there is a lot of pressure on water users. I would be very concerned if a significant pressure or burden were moved over to the primary production industries, particularly those in the south west, as they are strapped with the markets at present and with trying to get a margin from what they are doing.

Another concern comes through in a number of these reports. I do not have much time to refer directly to them all, but I will comment on one in particular. It is a submission from the South West Catchments Council on the south west Yarragadee water supply development. It refers to concerns about the model used to make judgments about what happens to water in the Yarragadee and the potential impact of drawing out a particular quantity. It refers to an error factor of two to four metres in the potential drawdown. The submission cites anywhere between one and three metres - in one case five metres - of potential drawdown with what could be argued as an error factor of two to four. If the error factor goes the wrong way, that does not look too good for the potential impact on the Yarragadee. Indeed, the peer review, which is also referenced in the report, does not speak very highly of this particular model and the approach that the Water Corporation has taken to assess the potential impact of drawing water from the Yarragadee.

I will mention some other causes for concern. We have talked about significant environmental impacts, and that this will be a very conservative report in comparison with other reports from independent authorities. It is what I would see as the best-case scenario. I touched very briefly on having some mitigating options, such as pumping water from another part of the aquifer over to this one to fix the problem. In principle, some water will be grabbed from over here, and if problems arise, some water will be pumped from here to there. I have some issues with how that will work. I understand it is appropriate to have a backstop, but when the government proposes to spend nearly three quarters of a billion dollars on extracting 45 gegalitres, I would have thought that we would like a little more certainty than that.

The diameter of the pipeline that will pump this water is 1.4 metres. There is no figure in the report - at least I did not find one - that refers to the capacity of the pipeline. I am guessing that if it is 1.4 metres thick, a darn lot of water will be able to be put through it. It worries me that although the target is 45 gegalitres of water a year, the figure could easily increase to 90 gegalitres down the track when everything is in place and all those people who have concerns go away. If an investment of three quarters of a billion dollars is being put into it then it is not -

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Where did you get the figure of three quarters of a billion dollars from?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It is \$610 million, minister; it is nearly three quarters of a billion dollars.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It is more than \$700 million now, is it not?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: It is a lot of money. In the last bit of time that I have, I will refer to the focus of other states. It is no good my standing in this place and putting my point without putting forward an alternative. The main alternative that I will focus on is the issue of recycling. It is something that I believe we need to embrace

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as a community. Not that long ago I asked a question of the minister about the level of recycling in regional areas. He quite rightly pointed out that there is a great level of recycling. I believe the figure that was cited for regional areas was about 38 per cent. Based on the fact that it is a much higher cost to provide the service, it therefore makes it worthwhile to do that, and because the cost of service in the metropolitan area is considerably less, it does not have the same pressure on it to lift the level of recycling. While we are in these relatively good times, we need to put some things in place on a very serious level to deal with the issue of recycling. I will cite some of the things that have happened in the eastern states. An article from *The Australian* of 11 September headed "Turnbull 'puts ego ahead of results'" states -

The Weekend Australian on Saturday revealed a \$1 billion state government plan to boost Melbourne's water supply by 20 per cent by piping Melbourne's treated effluent to the Latrobe Valley to cool power stations had passed a feasibility study.

That is a tremendous outcome. Industry is a big user. It is a big user in Western Australia. I understand that even a local mineral sands works has a big demand on fresh clean water from our system. Why are we not looking at options of treating effluent - of which we have 100 gegalitres a year - to a level at which it can be used in its processes? The billion-dollar investment in Melbourne is quite significant. I will refer to another article from *The Weekend Australian* of 9 September headed "Goldfields city next in recycled sewage debate". I am referring to Bendigo, not to our local goldfields city. The article quotes the mayor, David Jones, and states -

"It's a debate the community is just starting to have," he said.

"I don't go around beating a drum about it, but it's a debate we have to have. If this is a drought, we can wait for it to rain and go back to sleep. But if this is climate change, then we need to make the tough decisions now."

I was disappointed that in Toowoomba the referendum to use recycled waste water in its water supply system returned a no vote. Australia is the driest continent in the world and we need to seriously consider investing in the use of water from recycled waste water.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Are you supporting the use of recycled waste water in your area?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I do not have any problems with that. Obviously, the first step is to look at industry users. I do not have a problem with the principle of using recycled sewage water, treated at the appropriate level, in our system.

I refer to an article in *The West Australian* on Wednesday, 9 August headed "Sewage on tap wins WA support". If this is an accurate measure, it is great, but I suppose these articles can be taken with a grain of salt. The article reads -

Most West Australians are happy to drink treated sewage, according to the latest Westpoll.

The survey found 64 per cent of respondents supported adding treated recycled waste water into drinking supplies to help address WA's water shortage.

As I said, if that is an accurate measure, it is great and we should move down that path.

An article that appeared in the *Australian Financial Review* on Wednesday, 23 August, headed "ALP springs water plan" reads -

The federal opposition has committed to recycling 30 per cent of waste water by 2015 in an effort to combat global warming and drought-proof major cities.

What a great move. I understand that the Western Australian minister has committed to 20 per cent. We need to take a bigger step in this direction. I am effectively out of time. I could quote a number of articles.

The Nationals' position on this issue is, clearly, that it does not support pumping 45 gegalitres of water into the Perth integrated system from the south west Yarragadee. It believes that there will be the potential for significant environmental effects and that the regional needs could be underestimated, and it is people in the regions who make the decisions on the issues that arise from drawing water from that source. The National Party supports recycling. It believes that the state government should make a significant investment in recycling. The National Party certainly does not support metering farm dams as a way of monitoring water from farm water supplies.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Darling Range) [3.32 pm]: The member for Stirling has raised a matter of great importance to Western Australia, particularly the south west of the state. His motion to oppose the extraction of water from the south west Yarragadee aquifer for transport to the wider Perth metropolitan area and the integrated water supply system reflects a significant degree of concern by people in the south west of the state about the possible

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consequences from that proposal. It reflects the concern that is being strongly expressed about the possible environmental consequences and, in particular, the impact on wetland areas. The Poison Gully area is the area most likely to be affected in the extreme circumstances of a lack of adequate recharge and falling water levels in that area. Concern has been expressed about the flow into the Blackwood River and the impact of that on the river system. Concern has also been expressed about the possibility of saline encroachment, particularly in the Bunbury area, given that currently it gets its water from ground water supplies. The concern is that with negative pressure created from additional extraction to the south, around Jarrahwood, saline water may be sucked back into the system and will impact on the fresh water Bunbury is getting. There is concern about the possible impact on existing water users, bearing in mind that about 60 to 70 gigalitres of water a year are extracted from the Yarragadee system for local users.

It is necessary to consider what alternatives are available. Certainly, recycling is one possibility, but whether it will produce adequate water in the required time frame that is being considered in the Yarragadee proposal is debatable. I certainly support recycling and associated aspects being more thoroughly investigated than perhaps is currently the case. It is also necessary to consider the possibility of desalinating water from the Wellington Dam. In answer to a question on notice that I put to the minister a few weeks ago, the minister advised that about 40 to 50 gigalitres a year could be extracted from that source. That possibility should be expedited. I am at a loss to understand why it cannot be expedited more quickly than it appears to have been.

Mr M.P. Murray: Are you aware of what is being done on that dam?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I know that some work has been done, but a lot more could be done. There is potential for a significant amount of water to be extracted from the dam. The opposition agrees that the needs of local water users in the south west area should be considered first. Their needs must be met, and if there is a negative impact on the amount of water that industry or residential users can extract, this proposal should not go ahead. A thorough environmental assessment should be undertaken. The Environmental Protection Authority process is being followed, and it should be allowed to occur, so long as it is comprehensive, thorough, professional and independent. I look forward to the outcomes of that process.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Are you supporting the motion?

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I will get to that. The opposition has the view that if the proposal goes ahead and there is a negative environmental impact of any significance, there should be a reduction in or ceasing of the water that is being extracted. For all those reasons, the opposition believes it would be preferable to support an amendment.

Amendment to Motion

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I move -

To delete all words after "state government to" and insert -

ensure that prior to any water being extracted from the south west Yarragadee aquifer to boost the integrated water supply scheme -

- (a) local water supply needs are met first; and
- (b) all necessary environmental assessments are completed and, if appropriate, approvals granted.

It would be somewhat premature to support the motion moved by the member for Stirling, albeit that he has raised some very important issues. It would be more balanced and appropriate to support my amendment, which is very responsible.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta - Minister for Water Resources) [3.38 pm]: I know the amendment is before the house, but I would like a copy of it. It sounds as though it makes sense, but until I read the motion carefully, I am not sure whether the government will support it.

The motion moved by the member for Stirling is crass. The Liberal opposition does not wish to support it in its original form. The member in moving the motion did not make any good arguments for why we should not continue to plan to utilise the water in the south west Yarragadee. It is a marvellous resource and is drawn on heavily. It has the potential to be drawn on even more heavily. We would do that on the basis of sustainability, knowing that there would be minimal or no environmental impact. I do not know from where the member got the figures suggesting there would be a five-metre drop in the watertable. They are not the figures I have been shown. The figures may have been for an earlier model. The areas that would potentially suffer a reduction in water are minimal in both the extent of the areas that could be affected and the drop in water level, and that is after 30 years of drawing at maximum capacity. Those figures are not based on taking 45 gigalitres. They are

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based on taking a maximum draw, which is 45 gegalitres plus all the other bits over 30 years, and then there may be a small drop.

The member alluded to the fact that there are ways the proposal could be addressed if problems arise. People need to realise that the Water Corporation has a very clear interest in making sure that any additional draw on the south west Yarragadee does not impact in any substantial way on the environment. As the member said, and he exaggerated a bit by going to three-quarters of a billion dollars, the preliminary cost, after the design work is completed, is currently costed at just over \$600 million. That includes the integration infrastructure. The cost of the south west Yarragadee project alone is a bit over \$450 million. The cost of integration must be added to that, but that would be the same for any other major source in the south west of Western Australia - simply to get the water into the metropolitan system. That integration is not the pipeline to Perth; it is what is done in the metropolitan area to bring that water into the existing reservoirs and pipeline system. The Water Corporation would not invest \$450 million or more if, after a few years, it had to turn off the water source or reduce the draw because of an unforeseen environmental impact. It wants to make sure that it has the science right because it wants to make sure that it receives maximum return on infrastructure investment.

Mr P.D. Omodei: The Water Corporation is in the business of selling water, so it is a Caesar onto Caesar study in the first place, isn't it? If the Water Corporation does the study, it will always come up with a result that suits its own purpose.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not accept that. The project must be considered by the Environmental Protection Authority, which is an independent agency. The paper has been made available for scientific peer review, so it involves the professional reputations of a whole range of people in making sure that we have the very best science. Something like \$12 million has been spent on that investigation. I have confidence that there is a very high level of credibility in the science that has been done.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Murdoch University, the Curtin University of Technology and the University of Western Australia did not agree.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: They did not agree on particular aspects. There can be different points of view.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You just said that they all agreed, when they did not.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Leader of the Opposition is trying to nitpick. On the major issues, there is a very high level of support for the science that has been done. Professor Jorg Imberger has a reputation in the water field. He has been saying for years that we should take the water without even doing the science. He is so confident that he says we do not need to do all this study. There are clearly differences of opinion, because the Water Corporation has decided that more study should be done to prove the supply. There are differences of opinion, but no-one has been able to provide any scientific data to knock a major hole in the paper currently before the EPA. That paper is still undergoing peer review and assessment by the EPA. We want to make sure that that process is conducted in a full and proper way. On the basis of that, the government will be well informed to make a decision on the environmental impacts of taking 45 gegalitres of water from the south west Yarragadee. Any new source of water will need to go through a full approval process. This process has been going on for nearly four years. If members opposite want to suggest that we should not take water from the south west Yarragadee, they will have to put up with a significant reduction in standards of living, such as the implementation of total sprinkler bans, and impacts on industry and the whole quality of life of people.

This government is about doing the hard work to make sure that it can give the greatest possible security to water supply in a difficult situation. We are experiencing a drying climate. People are well aware that this year so far is the driest since records began to be kept in the mid-nineteenth century. This has been our driest winter on record. This comes as the culmination of a number of years in which we have seen declining rainfall. As I have already indicated, the run-off into our hills storage dams over the past eight years has been one-third of the long-term average. The hills dams have been substantially reduced as a source of water for the integrated water scheme. We need to look for new sources, and this government has done that. Since it was first elected in 2001 this government has brought in 76 gegalitres of new water sources. New bores in the north metropolitan area supplied 31 gegalitres; new dams at Wokalup and Samson Brook provided 23 gegalitres; the savings due to the Waterwise rebate programs provided another eight gegalitres; the Harris Dam pump-back provided five gegalitres; south west irrigation trading has already provided three gegalitres, with plans for more; and the Kwinana water reclamation plan now produces six gegalitres, which is used by industry and therefore adds to our capabilities.

Mr P.D. Omodei: That was built years ago.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It was commissioned and built by the Gallop government.

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Mr P.D. Omodei: Are you sure about that?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Absolutely. None of it was done during the time of the previous government. It might have been a twinkle in the then minister's eye, but nothing was actually done, and no money was committed. It was done by the present government.

The introduction of Harvey water trading promises to bring another 14 gegalitres on stream. The seawater desalination plant at Kwinana, which will start up next month, will provide 45 gegalitres. We are looking at the potential of other areas as well, but just those two projects will bring in nearly another 60 gegalitres. However, that does not match the decline in rainfall-dependent sources, and the fact that Western Australia has such a fast-growing economy. An extra four to five gegalitres need to be brought on stream every year just to meet economic and population growth in the south west of Western Australia. We are faced with a major challenge in achieving security of water supply. It is no good to say that we should stop the south west Yarragadee project because it is too hard, and not do anything, or just have a pipedream. We are doing a lot of work on Wellington Dam. It could be 10 years before we have all the environmental approvals and a clear understanding that the salinity is under control. It has dropped quite substantially as a result of what has been happening, but we must make sure that that is sustainable, and then we need a pipeline to bring the water in.

Mr J.H.D. Day: That is not an issue if you desalinate it.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We may not need to desalinate it. There is a range of different options, and we are working on that now. Some of the work on the ground is proving successful. However, we do not want to commit to spending hundreds of millions of dollars to bring in that water and then find that it does not work. That has happened in other parts of the world. We want to do the science and the research and to get the environmental clearances, and then we will have a high level of certainty that, if hundreds of millions of dollars are committed to bringing water from the Collie basin, the project will be sustainable for the next 40 or 50 years in delivering potable water.

Mr D.T. Redman: The point is made in one of the reports that, by 2033, if the needs of the south west increase to the point where residents of that region also need to draw from the 45 gegalitres that is to be pumped to Perth, that will happen, in which case the potential amount going to Perth could be reduced to 30 or even 25 gegalitres. Is that correct?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I cannot vouch for the figures, but I understand the thrust of what the member is saying; that is, the south west is growing, and we need to make sure that we look after the growing needs for water in that area. The government is certainly committed to doing that. I assume that the member for Stirling is not putting forward the proposition that water cannot be transferred between regions. For over 100 years we have been transferring water from Perth to Kalgoorlie and a number of agricultural towns in between, and that has been extended. The Liberal Party itself wanted to bring water from the Kimberley to Perth. It is not an issue of not being able to transfer water between regions; that is a nonsense. However, we need to look to the needs of the whole state for water, and in no way place the needs of the people of the south west below those of Perth or any other part of the state. We must look after the needs of people in every part of Western Australia.

Mr D.T. Redman: A \$450 million investment is going into something that, potentially, will only be bringing 30 gegalitres to Perth by 2033.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Those are not the figures that I have been given. A number of assumptions must be made about what industries might develop and what the future demand may be. Different answers will be obtained depending on what assumptions are being worked from. The member should keep in mind that there are people in the south west who support the south west Yarragadee project. They support it because there are many areas in the south west where, if a new industry were to be introduced, there is no readily available source of water. If a major pipeline is built as a trunk link, it will be possible to transfer water within the south west as well. For instance, the major industrial area at Kemerton near Bunbury has a real problem with water. If a major new industry that had a high demand for water wanted to position itself in Kemerton, water would have to be provided, and currently the means to do so are not available. The pipeline will go right through Kemerton. It will open up the potential for new industry to be located on the pipeline in Kemerton so that it can access the water.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: Is it not the triple C hazardous waste site?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I respect the member for Bunbury; however, I am not sure whether he was making a joke. What was the member talking about?

Mr G.M. Castrilli: What is interesting is that the industry that you are not talking about is the hazardous waste site in Kemerton.

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member for Bunbury is quite well aware that Kemerton is a major industrial site. There is not sufficient water in Kemerton to provide for a major food processing plant or a pulp mill. The water is not there. If the pipeline goes through Kemerton, the availability of water will mean that industry can grow in the area. Key interests in the south west have vocally expressed their support for the south west Yarragadee aquifer, primarily because it will create the infrastructure that will be the basis for future industrial growth in the south west. That is only one element. We must not only prove up the water source; we must also put in place the infrastructure to enable the south west to grow and to look after the interests of the south west. The idea of “us” and “them”, that the current demand is in Perth and that the demand in the south west is being met, is wrong. Demand is not being met in towns such as Bridgetown. We are developing another program for that town, because it has experienced quite severe water restrictions over the past few years. The lack of rainfall in that area means that it will have more restrictions this summer. The government has made a commitment to put in place another integrated scheme for five towns in that area. The needs of those towns will be met, and the needs of the south west will be met.

Mr P.D. Omodei: What about Manjimup?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Manjimup has not been brought to my attention as a major issue.

Mr P.D. Omodei: There is a shortage of water in the wettest part of the state.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There is a shortage of water across the whole of the state.

Mr P.D. Omodei: The Manjimup water supply is facing restrictions.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Manjimup has not experienced the severe restrictions that have been experienced in Bridgetown and other towns over the past several years. Those towns have real needs, and the government will not shirk from its responsibility to ensure that those needs are addressed and addressed adequately.

The issue is that we have a huge population growth in Perth and in integrated areas. That population growth is being experienced not only in Perth, but also in Mandurah, the south of Mandurah and Kalgoorlie and the goldfields. We must ensure that we provide water and that we do it in a way that allows us to manage any environmental impacts. Further, we must ensure that we provide water in a timely and cost-effective manner. Although a final decision on the south west Yarragadee has not been made - a huge amount of work has gone into it - if that project were to fail, we would look at other sources, such as another desalination plant or a range of small programs. We are already considering a range of small programs to bring on additional water. Those programs will not meet our needs for any length of time, so we would have to quickly bring on some other source. The state is growing very rapidly and that places real demands on our water supply, particularly given that we live in such a drying climate.

Mr D.T. Redman: What is the progress of desal 2?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: From my understanding, consultation on desal 2, which has only just started, will lead to our seeking the environmental approvals that are required. It is still early days. There is not just one site; a number of sites are being investigated. Desal 2 will be more expensive. The desalination plant will be on par with what we already have. There will be a cost escalation, because it will cost more to build a plant in the future. The big extra cost will be the integration, because we will not put a desalination plant alongside an existing one. That would compound the problems of the mix of water in Cockburn Sound. We would have to find another site. That site is likely to be further away; therefore, there will be greater piping costs bringing that water in. Those costs could be quite substantial.

Mr D.T. Redman: So there is a lot of political weight towards Yarragadee?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Certainly a huge amount of work has been done by the Water Corporation. The political reality is that in a drying climate all governments must deliver water, and they must deliver it in a timely manner. One might bank on having a wetter than average winter next year and the year after, and that, as a result, decide that we should postpone building the plant. However, if what we have experienced over the past eight years continues and we have another dry winter next year and the year after that, we will find ourselves in a dire situation if we do not move quickly to establish a major additional water source. This government is very much committed to maximising our water supply security and the integrated water scheme. On that basis, we will make a decision earlier rather than later. We will commit to ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place. Members opposite pooh-poohed the government about the desalination plant and said that it should not build it. The year we complete the desalination plant is the driest year on record and confirmation that the government has made a very wise decision. If we had experienced above-average rainfalls over the past two years, the opposition would have attacked us. It may have got away with attacking us by saying that we built the plant when it was not needed. When dealing with the weather - members of the National Party have some understanding of farming - we have to live with vagaries. We have to take a prudent position. Sometimes we

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need to take a gamble. A farmer might take a gamble by planting a crop even though it has not rained. The gamble might pay off because it rains. Alternatively, a farmer might plant a crop before the rains properly come and he might do his dough because it does not rain. That is life.

We certainly want to give more security to our water supply. On that basis, and having done all the work to give the greatest security we can, we will commit to providing water in a responsible way and in an appropriate time. That means doing the hard work, which is what we did with the seawater desalination plant and which is what we are doing in looking at what the next source will be. A huge amount of effort has gone into the south west Yarragadee, because all the early signs indicated that it would be a good quality water source, that taking it was environmentally sustainable and that, compared with other schemes, it could be carried out at the lowest cost. All that must be proved up. The environmental issue has not been ticked off. When all those things are in place, the government will make a decision.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Given your comments about a drying climate - obviously that is the case, particularly given the climate over the past eight years; indeed, since 1974 we have been way down on previous levels - surely that casts further doubt on the ability to take water from the southern Yarragadee, given the impact that that will have on wetlands in that south west corner. How can you make a decision when the impact of our drying climate will not take place for several years?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is factored into the model. We are considering a conservative model. We are factoring in a drier climate. We are not using the figures that we would have used 20 or 30 years ago. More recent rainfall figures have been factored in as part of the model. The fact is that whatever the source, we will have to use the same figures. Some people have suggested that we should use Wellington Dam. Wellington was rated at roughly 100 gegalitres a year when we had high rainfall. It could not be rated that highly now.

Mr P.D. Omodei: There is 180 gegalitres in Wellington Dam.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am talking about annual production. Between 85 to 100 gegalitres would flow through the dam on average in the wet years, so it could be rated at that level. It cannot be rated that way now.

Mr P.D. Omodei: If you look at Wellington and the Collie east proposal and gravitating water into the mine voids, that is a major project. However, there has been only one season. Has there even been one season?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This is our second winter season.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It will take a long time for that project to impact on the salinity level in Wellington Dam. Surely we would be better off using reverse osmosis.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We would not want to put in place an expensive reverse osmosis plant only to find that the reduction in salinity is working. I am running out of time. The Collie basin has fantastic potential for producing water for irrigation, industry and drinking water. It is a complex mix. We are spending a fair bit of money and doing a lot of work to ensure that we can bring that on-stream as soon as possible to get the right mix of all those elements. There is the water in Wellington, water in the mine voids and dewatering water from the mine sites, which is very good, and the potential for reverse osmosis in different parts of that scheme. We must integrate it to produce the water that is required by industry and irrigators. As the Leader of the Opposition would know, this water has been too saline for too long and has caused a real problem for irrigators. Clearly there is potential also for drinking water and it all must be put together as a package that is sustainable economically and environmentally, and also meets the needs of people throughout the regions, including the south west.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Are you doing that; are you looking at that?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is what we have been working on. We have been working on it for a few years now and we must do a lot more work. We must push ahead with it as quickly as we can, but it will not be on pipe ready to come into the integrated scheme as quickly as it could be if we were to commit to the south west Yarragadee in the next six months or so. There will continue, therefore, to be a time of major restriction before we can bring that into the scheme.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Do you support the amendment?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: If the amendment before us is passed, the motion will read -

That this house calls upon the state government to ensure that prior to any water being extracted from the south west Yarragadee aquifer to boost the integrated water supply scheme -

- (a) local water supply needs are met first; and
- (b) all necessary environmental assessments are completed and, if appropriate, approvals granted.

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The amendment is close to being acceptable. However, we will consider the needs of all sectors. The amendment suggests that local supplies should be met first. I am not sure what the amendment means by local supplies, because local supplies will be met first. However, it is a different matter if the amendment refers to anticipated supplies.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It is a responsible and sensible amendment, I suggest.

Mr P.D. Omodei: That is how keen we are in assisting the government to solve a problem that it has been making a mess of over the years.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Although the amendment could be worded better, the general intent of it is an improvement on the motion, and I am willing to accept the amendment moved by the member for Darling Range. I do have some misgivings about it, but on my feet I do not have the time to change the words and tidy it up. The general intent of the amendment is in keeping with what the government is already doing. Therefore, the motion, as it will read with the passage of this amendment, will urge the government to do that which it is already committed to do, and on that basis I am very happy to accept the amendment.

MRS D.J. GUISE (Wanneroo - Deputy Speaker) [4.02 pm]: I would not have supported the motion of the member for Stirling without the amendment. As the member for Wanneroo, I am allowed to be a bit parochial, given that the Gngangara mound takes up a fair bit of my electorate.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It doesn't belong to you; it belongs to the people of Western Australia.

Mrs D.J. GUISE: Exactly! That is the exact point I am about to make. I thank the Leader of the Opposition very much for that.

Mrs C.A. Martin: The Leader of the Opposition is not on his feet; okay! I want to hear what the member for Wanneroo has to say.

Mrs D.J. GUISE: I do not think I need any help from the member for Kimberley, but I thank her very much.

It has been estimated that up to 60 per cent of Perth's drinking water comes from the Gngangara mound. In fact a table on the east Wanneroo land use and water management strategy released last year gives an indication of the situation. Apart from 5.7 gegalitres that comes out of Jandakot, other bores in Gwelup, Mirrabooka, Wanneroo, Pinjar, Lexia, Neerabup and some other artesian waters from the Yarragadee and Yanchep amount to 156 gegalitres and make up Perth's water scheme allocations.

I might have had some sympathy for the motion if we intended to suck the south west dry. However, that is not the proposal. I must say that having just been along the south west coastal region, I am probably guilty of a bit of water envy. I have never seen so much water in my life. If the member for Darling Range was still in the chamber, I would tell him about friends of mine who live in Parkerville. I cannot remember the last time I saw one of the dams there full but, by God, recently when I went south the dams were overflowing. I had never seen so much water in my life, even on the side of the road. The dams were all full to overflowing. I nearly drove off the road a few weeks ago. It was amazing. I could not believe how much water the electorates of members south of the state have. Give me a break! Here I am in an electorate with an industry and wetlands at risk and members down south will not share 45 gegalitres. I am sorry; I am over it! We need some of that water. Members must share it with the rest of Perth, like we do with them. In fact, water from the catchment area at Mundaring goes to Kalgoorlie. We need to be a little bit real in this place about what is going on.

I have some support for the notion of recycling water and managed aquifer recharge. The minister knows that as far as I am concerned it cannot happen soon enough. The message to the Environmental Protection Authority and the Department of Health about a managed aquifer recharge is: what is your problem? This has been happening overseas in countries all around the world for years. Israel has had a successful managed aquifer recharge for 27 years. The World Health Organisation has guidelines for it. I wish members opposite would build a bridge, get over this subject and move on; it cannot happen soon enough. I agree with the member for Stirling and others who have spoken that there has to be a multi-source answer to this issue, with recycling either directly or indirectly through a managed aquifer recharge. Recycled grey water and waste water can be used for industrial-type estates as well as for the horticultural industry, depending on the crops being grown. Raw vegetables, of course, need an extra level of treatment. I am particularly interested in this subject matter, because the industries north of Wanneroo in my electorate will rely on the aquifer for its survival. They are absolutely under threat. That area is actually the salad bowl for Perth. We are now at the point of making a decision on whether we continue to feed Perth or import vegetables. I cannot swear in this place, but members can imagine the "carrots" that come from China. I have seen how they are grown.

Mr D.T. Redman: There is a big salad bowl in the south west, too.

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Mrs D.J. GUISE: There is, and I am quite happy for us to share the water. I am just asking that members opposite cut us a bit of slack and acknowledge the pressure that is being placed on the northern suburbs for the supply of water and the pressure that is put on the Mundaring catchment area to support the agricultural region to the east and Kalgoorlie, and accept the fact that we will not drink the Yarragadee aquifer dry. We just want members opposite to share enough with the rest of us to accommodate the growth and look after growers in the south west as well. I am therefore being very magnanimous. I could probably talk on this subject for an hour, but since I have just been given the nod from the member for Collie-Wellington, I will sit down. I agree with the amendment wholeheartedly.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Wellington - Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker -

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O’Gorman): I remind the member for Collie-Wellington that it is inappropriate to pass between the member on his or her feet and the Chair, so I ask him to watch that in future.

Several members interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: It is a bit of a dry argument, is it not?

I support the amendment. This issue has been brought to my attention many times by people in the south west. Although the notions of recycling and all those other ideas that National Party members talked about are great and we support them, in the main we must look for other water sources. There is some opposition from different areas to taking water from the Yarragadee aquifer, but the work that has been done over a long time now will beat any canal that we could put in. I therefore support the amendment. Issues will come out about the routing of the pipeline itself. Already some farmers are jumping on my back although the pipeline is only proposed at this stage. I think they want to put it along the freeway together with everything else! We must acknowledge that the south west region will grow; we have talked about Camden as one, but growth factors in areas further south must be taken into account. For quite some years Balingup, Yabberup Brook and such places have had problems with water. I will sit down and give other members an opportunity to talk.

DR S.C. THOMAS (Capel) [4.08 pm]: I was interested to hear the member for Wanneroo say that there has been a huge demand for water from the Gngangara mound. Of course, her government has been in charge of it for the past five years. I commend the member for Wanneroo for supporting the amendment moved by the member for Darling Range; it is a very sensible amendment. Has there been any environmental damage done by the extraction of water from the Gngangara mound?

Mrs D.J. Guise: Certainly; I just said there was.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: So damage has been done.

Mrs D.J. Guise: Yes, absolutely! That is what happens when it all comes from one place.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: The member for Wanneroo’s government has been in charge for five years and here is the issue -

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Any environmental damage was done about 10 to 15 years ago.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: It is still occurring.

Mr M.P. Murray: Are you supporting the amendment?

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Absolutely! As I said, I support the amendment. It is a very good and very well thought out amendment by the member for Darling Range. Not one person will stand and say that Perth should not have south west water under any circumstances. I do not think that is the way things should go. My electorate sits on top of the Yarragadee aquifer, as does my wife’s 100 acres of paradise. We have a vested interest in this process. The issue is the potential damage that might occur. Another issue is that we must trust the government to make sure that the environmental damage is minimised.

The problem with the Yarragadee aquifer is that it is a very large aquifer. It is a very slow moving aquifer; estimates vary from 10 000 to 40 000 years of how long it has taken to move from where it ingresses to its egress into the ocean. It is an open aquifer. It is not like a water balloon; we cannot grab it by its neck and pull out 45 gegalitres of water. It has numerous openings to the ocean. The issue is not how much water is coming in or going out. The issue is the pressure of the water as it sits in the Yarragadee, and how that relates to the ingress and egress of saltwater and what that does to the watertables. Unfortunately, the minister will not know the answer to that - no matter how many studies he does - until the government starts pumping out the water. I would like the minister to come up with a set of environmental parameters under which, if we find that once pumping starts there is a major pressure problem, he will turn back the tap. The minister would negate a lot of criticism if he came up with a set of environmental parameters that stated that at a certain point -

A government member interjected.

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Dr S.C. THOMAS: We must compare \$600 million with damage to the environment of the south west, which is something that neither side of Parliament can afford if it means that the tuart trees and half of our state forest in the south west are to be killed off. That is something that the government has the potential to do if it does not control how much water comes through the tap. That is one issue the government must address.

The other issue is the pipeline. Unfortunately, the minister has been hoodwinked to some degree. There were three potential pipeline routes. One impacted on the Department of Conservation and Land Management, which is now part of the Department of Environment and Conservation. It said, "Go away; don't bring the impacts onto us." Another route impacted to some degree on CALM and to some degree on the Department of Industry and Resources. Sand mining tenements were involved. Those departments said, "Don't bring that thing near us, because it has imposts." Another had imposts for private landholders. Guess who is suffering because of the government's decision? The local landholders were rolled over. That is an issue that the minister needs to address.

Amendment put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and passed.