

UNDERGROUND BORES, CONTROLS

**1326. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:**

In areas where horticulture production exists and future irrigation development or other high water-use development is commencing that may threaten the area's long-term supply, I ask -

- (1) What controls exist on the consumption of water from underground bores to guarantee long-term sustainable water use?
- (2) Who is responsible for the identification of an adequate initial water supply and continual monitoring to ensure sustainable water usage?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I provide a response on behalf of the minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

- (1) The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has been advised by the Water and Rivers Commission that, as the manager of Western Australia's water resources, the commission is responsible for ensuring that sufficient water of suitable quality is available for future generations. The commission sets allocation limits for aquifer systems based on sustainability principles that take into account aquifer recharge, water requirements for dependent ecosystems, and environmental provisions that take into consideration social and economic impacts. Applications for ground water licences are assessed by taking into account the impact on the environment and other uses and water use efficiencies. The commission annually reviews ground water abstraction by assessing reports of large developments and carrying out ground water use surveys. It also assesses water level and water quality data from its regional monitoring program.
- (2) The Water and Rivers Commission, through its allocation planning process, sets allocation limits. These are the maximum levels of allocation which can be utilised on an annual basis and which allow acceptable levels of pumping stress and protect dependent economic, social and environmental values. The commission reviews the allocation limits as new data and information become available. The commission can issue exploration licences for potential developers to assess the extent of a ground water source. This licence does not guarantee that the licensee will be granted the water that is found. The commission's licensing system ensures that ground water abstraction occurs within the allocation limits unless special circumstances require a temporary overdraw. The commission also makes certain that monitoring is adequate, leading to improved water accounting.