

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY, BUDGET ALLOCATION

**Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture:**

I mentioned to the minister outside the House earlier that I would ask a question today about the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. In yesterday's budget, references were made to budget allocations of only \$40 million or thereabouts for the state salinity strategy and the National Heritage Trust mark 2.

- (1) Will the minister please state exactly where in the budget is the allocation for the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality?
- (2) If not, when will the minister make a public announcement to the land care community of Western Australia that the Government has no intention of signing the action plan?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

- (1)-(2) That was a little rough. The State of Western Australia signed the bilateral agreement for the National Action Plan last year. There is no question of the State Government's having no intention of signing it.

Hon Murray Criddle referred to commitments in the budget to salinity strategy and National Heritage Trust mark 2 and asked about the commitment to the NAP. The global figure for this year's budget for salinity control is between \$40 million and \$42 million. Both figures have been quoted and I am still working my way through the budget to work it out. However, I think I have discovered the difference. I have found \$2 million in the agriculture budget's industry funds that are not included in the state fund list. I think that might explain the \$40 million of state money and \$2 million of industry money. The lower figure of \$40 million, which will be rolled out is, in the main, the State's core commitment to salinity funding. In response to the member's question outside the Chamber about the NAP matching funds, my informal advice to the member and my formal response now are very much the same: the funding shown in this budget in the main represents core funding, some of which will be used for matching purposes for the NHT 2 but not for the NAP. That is because the bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth is in place. Indeed, Western Australia was the second State in Australia to reach bilateral agreement.

Hon Murray Criddle: Is that a draft agreement?

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is the final agreement. The Government has reached full bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth on NHT 2.

Hon Murray Criddle interjected.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Hon Murray Criddle should not mislead me. I will get to the National Action Plan. Western Australia was the second State in Australia to reach the full bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth on NHT 2. Victoria beat WA by four days. As a result of reaching that agreement, the Government can now run through the state budget all of the NHT 2 matching funds. Western Australia is yet to reach agreement with the Commonwealth on the NAP, albeit the State has signed, but the Commonwealth has not countersigned. The Commonwealth has offered to match with some \$31 million as a precursor to reaching full agreement with the State. We are now working with the Commonwealth to try to bring that part, at least, to fruition.

Even though Western Australia has not reached formal agreement with the Commonwealth on the NAP, and other States have done so, very little money has flowed to any State regardless of whether it has an NAP agreement. Indeed, the receipts from the Commonwealth under the National Action Plan to four jurisdictions in Australia remain at nil or less than \$10 000 - and this is the \$1.4 billion scheme that we are expected to applaud. One State has received \$36 million and another \$20 million. However, they are tiny proportions of the \$1.4 billion.

The PRESIDENT: I trust that the minister is bringing his answer to a conclusion.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I am at that point now, Mr President.

As we reach agreement with the Commonwealth - I expect the matter to progress quickly - those additional amounts of money that will be freed up as a result of the agreement will be shown outside the budget period. Had we reached agreement prior to May, those amounts could have been included in the budget. That was not possible, but we still hope to get on with the spending, which, when the money is freed up, will be over-budget spending.