

WELLINGTON DAM

515. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Water Resources:

Given the shortage of water in Western Australia, I ask -

- (1) Why is it that the minister fines Western Australians who waste water while his government wastes 20 billion litres of water that flows over the top of Wellington Dam?
- (2) Can the minister explain why he refused to support Liberal Party plans to use Wellington Dam as a source of water?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

- (1)-(2) It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition suggests that water is being wasted when he acknowledged in debate in this place that he uses 90 000 litres a week on his own property.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It is a lot more than that.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is a lot more than that for his garden, not for productive use. It is for his domestic garden! The figures that the Leader of the Opposition used were about water for his own domestic use, not for a vineyard or an orchard. They were the figures he used in debate. Clearly, it is therefore of interest that he should suggest that water is being wasted when it flows over Wellington Dam. I think it was the last Liberal government that built the Harris Dam because the salinity level in the water in Wellington Dam was such that the water could not be used as potable water. As the Leader of the Opposition will well know, even the irrigators were concerned that the salinity was affecting the pastures and growing areas and was detrimental to that irrigation area. The results of the diversion of thousands of tonnes of salt from Wellington Dam are leading to the improvements in the level of salinity. That means that the amount of water that must be flushed from the bottom of the dam has been reduced, and that is one of the key reasons the dam is now overflowing.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Your own report recommends you make use of it.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We are. That water will be able to be made use of due to the recovery program, which this government is pursuing because it is the largest dam in the south west. It is a valuable resource, but we must make sure we get the salinity levels down so that it is usable. We are spending a great deal of money - in the order of \$30 million - on the first stage of that diversion so that we can utilise that water.