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**Hon Simone McGurk MLA**  
Minister for Training and Workforce Development;  
Water; Industrial Relations

[REDACTED]

Hon Chris Tallentire MLA  
Chair  
Education and Health Standing Committee  
[laehsc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:laehsc@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Tallentire

Thank you for your correspondence dated 9 May 2024, regarding the Education and Health Standing Committee's Report 7 - Discussion Paper on alternative proteins.

Past agricultural practices, including the overuse of fertilisers, have contributed to water quality issues in some areas of the State, including the Swan-Canning river system.

I can advise that the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) regularly monitors our State's groundwater and surface water resources to assess their health, and to investigate any potential water quality issues.

To protect our environment, water allocation limits for consumptive use are imposed by DWER for specific water resources, and these are regularly reviewed to account for climate change and rainfall variations.

In addition, licensed water users, including irrigators, are informed of the need to adopt water efficient management practices and to limit their fertiliser use. In select circumstances, waterways are fenced off to prevent livestock from polluting the water.

I also understand that there are legislative and planning mechanisms to protect water sources used for drinking water supplies from potential pollution sources, including agriculture.

Should current agricultural practices transition to other forms of protein production, DWER will assist potential water licensees to make best use of the available water and ensure that water allocation planning and supply planning reflects future water demand.

We remain astute to any changing farming practices or crop types that might require an increase in water use, which is particularly problematic in southwest Western Australia where climate change is impacting water resources. Any changes in farming practices should have the highest regard for water efficiency.

Over the years, numerous programs have been implemented to assist the agriculture industry to improve their access to water supplies, adapt to climate change and inform them of best management practices.

For example, in February 2024 I attended a Healthy Estuaries WA fertiliser management workshop in Denmark with local farmers. A record number of farms are participating in this year's fertiliser management program, which is improving the health of our waterways while helping farmers make significant savings through reduced fertiliser use.

Healthy Estuaries WA is a \$25 million State Government commitment which focuses on improving the health of Peel-Harvey estuary, Leschenault Estuary, Vasse-Geographe waterways, Hardy Inlet, Wilson Inlet, Torbay Inlet, and Oyster Harbour.

I can assure you that DWER continue to monitor our water resources to ensure there are sustainable into the future, and work with local community groups, irrigators and stakeholders to limit the impacts of agriculture and livestock production on our water resources.

Yours sincerely



HON SIMONE McGURK MLA  
**MINISTER FOR WATER**

6 June 2024