

WATER — LICENCE FEES

799. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the minister representing the Minister for Water:

On Monday I travelled to Manjimup for a field program on issues relating to the Water for Food program. I am sure that the minister is aware that the new water licence fees are initially being introduced to the mining industry and the public water supply, and are also proposed to be extended to agriculture.

- (1) I visited a horticulturalist on his family farm in Dixvale, who has a surface water licence for 50 megalitres. Does the minister think it fair that this family should pay the same amount—\$6 668—for a licence renewal as the Ord Irrigation Cooperative, which is licenced to use 246 300 megalitres from the Ord River?
- (2) Does the department think it fair that a marron producer in Yanmah with a surface water licence for 13 megalitres should pay the same amount—\$6 668—for a licence renewal as the Water Corporation, which is licenced to use 53 800 megalitres from Serpentine Dam?
- (3) Given that these examples show how unfair the government's water tax grab is, will the minister ask the Minister for Water to withdraw his fundamentally flawed water tax grab?

The PRESIDENT: Before the Minister for Regional Development answers, I highlight that some parts of that question were actually seeking an opinion. Members should be aware that when they frame questions, they should not be seeking opinions or a legal opinion.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) No decision has been made on whether water licence fees will be introduced for the agriculture sector. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is seeking feedback on the implementation of a cost-recovery approach for the assessment of applications for water licences and permits. Consultation is currently underway, including a discussion paper and community workshops in Bunbury, Perth, Broome, Manjimup and Geraldton.

A decision on whether fees will apply to the agriculture sector and the quantum of those fees will be made after the consultation period. The discussion paper includes a table showing possible fees if there is to be full cost recovery. The fee structure is based on risk to the water resource depending on the level of allocation of the water resource and the volume of the licence. The fee for a licence renewal ranges from \$4 001 for a low-risk licence to \$6 668 for a high-risk licence. The fee would be payable once every 10 years on renewal.