

**WATER SERVICES LICENSING (WATER CONSERVATION TARGET) AMENDMENT BILL 2008**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 16 September.

**HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral)** [10.08 am]: I rise to support this bill, which was so well introduced by Hon Paul Llewellyn. The key issue here is that the bill is about the proper and sustainable management of the state's water resources. In 2007, using the latest results from more than 70 experiments involving 21 climate models from around the world, CSIRO Water for a Healthy Country Flagship scientists Mr Tim Cowan and Dr Wenju Cai traced a complex set of interactions between the circulation of the atmosphere and rainfall over the south west of this state. Mr Cowan says that the region receives the bulk of its rainfall in the winter months as a result of the seasonal movement of a ridge of high pressure in the subtropics. Year-to-year variations in this seasonal cycle are a well-known feature of the climate of the Southern Hemisphere and are known as the southern annular mode, or SAM. What seems to be happening is that, on average, this ridge of high pressure is not moving as far north as it did in earlier decades of the twentieth century. This work is important because the current 15 per cent reduction in the winter rainfall in the south west of Western Australia since the 1960s has, on average, translated into an over 40 per cent reduction in the inflows into Perth dams. Mr Cowan says that by using climate models to identify why this is happening, the scientists have concluded that increases in greenhouse gases can explain half the rainfall trend. The usual natural variations in the SAM might contribute to the remainder of the reduction. Mr Cowan says that one of the most consistent results from the climate models is that, as carbon dioxide continues to increase, the rainfall in the south west of Western Australia will continue to decrease.

What is really interesting in this whole debate is that we must remember that this state is hell-bent on throwing all caution to the wind in terms of climate change and will, in our estimation from looking at all the available figures, be emitting about 130 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum by 2015. We need to put that in some significant context. In 1995 the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of this state were in the region of 49 million tonnes per annum. In the foreseeable future, this state will have lifted its annual carbon dioxide equivalent emissions by approximately three times its 1995 figures. We are doing this with total impunity. This process of throwing all caution to the wind and not having any responsible or sustainable management programs for power, water or any entity for which there should be sustainable parameters will mean that future water supplies will increasingly be extremely deficient. Until such time as we put in place a significant structure that deals with water use minimisation, we are going to have significant problems. This bill is the very bill that will do that. This bill promotes demand management, also known as demand side management, or DSM, which entails actions that influence the quantity or patterns of use of commodities consumed by end users. An action such as targeting the reduction of peak demand during periods when water supply systems are constrained is obviously one of the benefits of this process. Peak demand management does not necessarily decrease total water consumption but can be expected to reduce the need for investment in extra supplies, because water use is balanced across the state. Managing urban water demand through the right mix of restrictions, pricing and water efficiency is essential to ensure healthy, safe and reliable water supplies in times of low water availability.

There seems to be a herd of elephants in the room, because we seem oblivious to the train wreck that is approaching this state. All we are hell-bent on doing is making fiscal profit in this term of government or within this generation. As a society that should know better, we are not establishing any procedures that will husband or reserve resources into the future.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Did you hear Mr Imberger on radio this morning?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Yes, I did.

**Hon Helen Morton:** He warned against doing exactly what you're doing now.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** I have a great deal of time for Mr Imberger. I have met with him on several occasions. The key issue is that we are using our resource at an unsustainable level. Mr Imberger says that. The member needs to listen to what Mr Imberger is saying.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Mr Imberger said don't create fear and panic where there shouldn't be any.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** The problem is that we cannot continue to say as the tiger approaches, "Don't worry; the tiger's friendly. It won't eat us; it won't bite us." Until we deal with the issues that face us rather than ignore them —

**Hon Helen Morton:** It's not being ignored.

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Deputy President

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**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Of course it is being ignored, and I will tell members why it is being ignored in a minute; they should continue listening.

The key issue is that in most cases Western Australia is probably the most draconian of all the states in its approach to climate change, water management and a whole range of issues. History shows us that our cities and towns have been established around available water. That was the nature of how things were done. Cities were built next to rivers—London on the River Thames, Paris on the River Seine and Perth on the Swan River. We did that because there was available water. We are now drawing down on our long-term supplies. Groundwater aquifers are not readily recharged. As we have just heard, we already have a 40 per cent reduction in the inflows into our dams. CSIRO is telling us this, not the greenies; it is the authority. We really need to look at how we are managing water.

It is interesting to note that, as I said, cities are normally established where the resource is to sustain the city—that is, water. We are in the process of building another desalination plant in the Pilbara in Western Australia. It is needed, but it is needed because we are not sustainably using our water resources. Harding Dam is in the area, but it has significant problems and cannot produce enough water. It is the only major dam in the area. There is also the area of Millstream where water is drawn down. As we know, we cannot build any new housing in Port Hedland because the town does not have enough water. Forty houses are proposed to be built in Port Hedland, but because it has run out of water supplies, the new houses that are proposed cannot be built. We need to establish a plan for the development and maintenance of water supplies. This bill will do nothing more than put in place a series of controls and requirements for the authorities to test against the sustainability of supply—which they do not do now.

The Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill 2008 promotes demand management, and managing urban water demand through the right mix of restrictions, pricing and water efficiency is essential for ensuring that we have healthy, safe and reliable water supplies in times of low water availability; as climate change bites more, we will need to husband our resources. I note there has been some interjection from the other side of the house, so I assume that we have some climate change sceptics on the other side of the house—is that correct?

Several members interjected.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It would be very interesting to find out at some stage, by taking a straw poll, which members of this place actually believe what major scientists from all around the world are telling us.

Water restrictions are a commonly used tool to manage water demand. Temporary restrictions are used to balance short to mid-term supply demand, while permanent water conservation measures need to be implemented for long-term demand management. These are the very basic tools of any engineers in developing any plan, in using any resource that they have their hands on, be it water, steel supplies or whatever. We do need a basic management tool for managing water demand. In the water authority we have, quite clearly, some very, very good and eminent people who know how to deal with water, but unless a philosophical direction is given from the current government, or indeed any government of this state, then we will be leaving those experts with a very, very limited range of options.

I would like to talk about what happened in 1988—there is at least one member in the chamber who was a member in 1988—when we actually had one of the most progressive water strategies and environment strategies called “Greenhouse 1988”, and it was leading Australia. A large committee was formed and there were regular updates in the media about how to constrain water use; how to limit it; how to manage it; and how to develop processes that considered water consumption. At that time Rio Tinto, to its commendation, published a really fascinating booklet that was promoted by the government of the day and went to all households throughout the Kimberley and the Pilbara. It contained information about water management, planting the right plants and putting in place the right processes so that people could limit their water use; really progressive directions were being taken by corporations and governments back in 1988.

**Hon Helen Morton:** That really worked, didn't it?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It did.

Several members interjected.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** No, the interesting thing was that houses were being built with verandas with eaves and there was a complete parameter of how to build houses to cater for the weather conditions in the north west. Low-water gardens with native plants were being introduced and it really saved quite a significant amount of water from the Millstream system, from the De Grey, from the Yule and all of the systems where we were drawing down water; it was about consuming less. We have three bore fields—namely, the De Grey, the Yule

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Deputy President

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and the Turner—and the water authority found the measures so effective that it actually turned off the Yule River bore field because water consumption had been dramatically reduced.

This is the most arid nation in the world.

**Hon Michael Mischin:** I don't know—Saudi Arabia seems pretty dry.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** It is not actually, believe it or not.

**Hon Norman Moore:** Don't argue with the Greens—they know everything!

Several members interjected.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** A gentleman I am sure Hon Norman Moore would know used to run a trucking business in Port Hedland; he is now in Saudi Arabia promoting the use of the planting systems that were introduced into the Pilbara in the 1980s to help the Saudi Arabians reclaim some of their desert country. We could say it is an export industry out of Port Hedland.

We really need to understand that we just cannot continue to use a non-renewable resource in the way we do, otherwise we will just have the coast dotted with hundreds of desalination plants, which is not sustainable. Desalination plants have their own set of problems; bitterns discharged from desalination plants have already been shown to have a marked effect on regional fish stocks.

At the same time as we are having this debate, work has been underway federally to determine how to best strike a balance between water restrictions and alternative water management tools so that the benefits are maximised and the economic, social and environmental costs are as low as possible. Best practice water pricing is a key element of national and state water reform. Best practice pricing and economically efficient and sustainable use of water resources must be promoted because they will, in turn, reduce the demand on water supplies. That is a federal position that has been operating quite effectively since 2007.

**Hon Helen Morton:** So do you support the increase in household water prices?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** No, but we can look at pricing.

**Hon Helen Morton:** But do you support realistic pricing of household water?

**Hon Donna Faragher:** Yes or no?

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** In Western Australia we give water away.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Why don't you just say yes? Do you support realistic pricing?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Let the member on his feet speak through the Chair and without interjections.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** Thank you, Mr President. I will respond to that unruly interjection!

**Hon Donna Faragher:** It was just a question; it's a simple yes or no.

**Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE:** A key issue is that we actually give water away; the mining industry and the Ord River irrigation system get their water free. An estimate was made a few years ago that about \$6 million worth of water is given away each year in the Ord. Until we make sure that water given away to industry for free is paid for, then there is no need to look at any other structures.

The unfettered sale and use of water is a failed course. Unfortunately, that is one of the problems with Western Australian departments; be it water, electricity, or any utility, the imperative is to make a profit wherever possible, and so water is sold. The more water consumed, the more profit is made; the more electricity sold, the more profit is made. Demand management is the complete reversal of that process; it is actually about telling departments that their primary reason for being is to husband the resource, not to be out there promoting its unfettered use.

With greater efficiency in water use, less water will be required on a per capita basis, and demand on urban water supplies will also be moderated. That is the federal government's position. It must be noted that the federal national water initiative outlined actions to improve water use efficiency. The commonwealth Water Efficiency and Labelling Standards Act 2005 came into effect on 1 July 2005, and all states now have corresponding legislation to ensure that the scheme applies consistently across Australia. Planning is underway to expand that scheme.

The National Water Commission is coordinating a national review of temporary water restrictions in large urban centres, being those with over 50 000 connections. This will enable better sharing and comparison of the experiences in different states and inform future actions. Managing water supply and discharge system losses, including leakage, excess pressure, overflows and other maintenance needs, is largely being implemented by the

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Deputy President

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urban water industry. Leakage is reported on an annual basis to the National Water Commission's national performance reports for major and non-major urban utilities using the infrastructure leakage index. The national performance reports also report two indicators of water loss. Whilst they are good micro initiatives, none of them deal with the elephant in the room. I refer to cheap sales, unrestricted water and bore use and the promotion of a consumerist approach to the use of water. It is imperative that water use be managed, monitored, reduced and reclaimed as an imperative. The Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill 2008 does just that.

It would be remiss of me not to mention David Suzuki, who gave a talk at Perth's Riverside Theatre on 22 October. He has been touring Australia to promote his new book *From Naked Ape to Superspecies*, which provides a provocative look at the possible breakdown of the earth's life support systems. Dr Suzuki spoke about a number of issues during his presentation. The first and most important one was the subject of water. During an interview he said —

Water is what makes life on this planet possible. It infuses all living things. When you go to Mars, when you go to another planet, what's the first thing they look for to find out if there's life? Water. Without water you don't have life. So water has always struck me as something that ought to be sacred.

He wrote the following on his David Suzuki Foundation website —

Climate change is already having a tremendous impact on water supplies, shrinking glaciers and causing more frequent droughts and flooding.

He further states —

Even the increased precipitation that occurs with climate change is not enough to make up for losses from melting glaciers and increased evaporation. Glaciers act like bank accounts, storing snow and ice during cool, wet weather and releasing water when we need it most, during hot, dry summers or years of drought.

I spent some time working with the Shundahai Network near Albuquerque. I am reminded of my old friend Corbin Harney of the Western Shoshone Nation, who passed over on 10 July 2007. He is sorely missed by the Dineh Navajo. I am reminded of a process that he made us go through each morning when we were living in tepees at about 8 500 feet on Sacred Mountain. Each morning 800 people would stand around a small fire waiting for the sun to rise and the dew to drop. Because there was a bit of ice at night, there was an incredible relationship between the sun rising, the dew dropping, the grass getting wet and the small rivulets that started to meander down the mountain. Harney warned of a quickly approaching time when the earth would be so contaminated by the results of human activity that the only water that would be available would be toxic to all forms of life. His vision, however, was not fatalistic. He remained convinced that humans have the power to turn things around. He used to end each morning's ritual by saying that water has life and that we have to pray for it. He said that all water comes from Mother Earth; it is her blood and our lifeline.

**HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan)** [10.35 am]: I rise to speak in support of the Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill 2008, which was introduced by Hon Paul Llewellyn. He put a considerable amount of work into the bill. Since the bill was introduced in March 2009, it has been debated from time to time. During that time I have had an opportunity to review the government's response to the bill.

**Hon Helen Morton:** It was first introduced in 2007.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Yes. The ideas in the bill have been tossed around by members of both sides of the chamber for an extended period and during that time our water situation has not improved. As Hon Robin Chapple outlined, a new desalination plant will be built up north to try to address our water supply needs. Many people are talking about ways that we can better manage our water. That is good because it is important to keep ideas fresh and to keep up to date with what is going on around the world. It is also important to recognise that our water supply problems are not going away. In my portfolio areas of planning and housing, the issues of water conservation and planning to protect our groundwater supplies are major issues. It is imperative that we conserve water and that every decision is made with the full recognition that water is a scarce commodity. Water must be managed wisely.

I come from Southern California, which has the same kinds of issues that we face on the west coast of Australia. I lived in a desert community. People in that community were acutely aware of the limited water supply. Having travelled around the world, many members would know that the urban landscape in Southern California is a bit like a moonscape. The native environment comprises cacti and spinifex. We did not use water to transform the urban landscape into a lush and green environment. We used our water supply wisely to create desert gardens.

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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We made the most of the cacti. We should look at what happened in Southern California to ensure that we do not repeat the same mistakes that were made there. People in Southern California overused water. There were far too many swimming pools in backyards, which increased the humidity in the valley and caused air quality problems, which lead to issues such as asthma. Western Australia is in a great position to view how other places have managed scarce water supplies. As my colleagues have outlined, we have failed to grasp the opportunity to make prudent decisions about water management. When I read the government's response to this bill, I was dismayed that it had dismissed some of the suggestions outright. Members should take another look at that.

I refer to the Garden Industry Alliance's joint position statement. Hopefully members received a copy of that position statement either last week or the week before. It contains many ideas for an integrated approach to water management strategies. The statement is a short and beautifully presented document that contains several short, medium and long-term strategies for reducing scheme water use and for using rainwater tanks in an economically sustainable and healthy way. Many Western Australians have taken to the idea of installing rainwater tanks, but local government is falling behind in its ability to approve the tanks and to allow them to be plumbed into greywater systems.

The Garden Industry Alliance is kicking around some ideas, including the introduction of government policy and legislation that mandate the incorporation of alternative water supply capabilities in new and retrofitted commercial, residential and industrial buildings. Many of us have talked about fitting dual plumbing to new and renovated residential housing stock. It was very disappointing when the minister cancelled the 5-star plus stage 2 program; however, Hon Alison Xamon will go into more detail about that. It is a great program and it should be supported. We really are going down the wrong path when we allow the Housing Industry Association to stifle such programs.

Some of the points raised in the Garden Industry Alliance position paper will, I believe, have unanimous support. We like our homes to be attractively landscaped. In fact, house prices can be increased by as much as 12 per cent if the garden is beautiful. Why can we not have a beautiful garden by using our water wisely? It will mean that the government will have to put in place systems that provide an economic advantage for people. The position paper refers to a series of rebates for the installation of bores, greywater systems, rainwater tanks and new irrigation systems. Members might think it unusual that we want to irrigate more to save water. The installation of a new water-efficient irrigation system saves water; not only can we have a beautiful garden, we can use water wisely. A rebate is a really good investment for the government because overall water use is reduced. The alliance also suggests rebates for rain sensor or soil moisture systems as a way to use new technologies to manage this scarce resource in a clever way. It also suggests maintenance rebates. We know that water leakage accounts for 4.2 per cent of water use; that is, 4.2 per cent of our water goes down the drain because we do not look after our taps.

I commend the Garden Industry Alliance paper to members; it provides a lot of information and ideas about the ways innovative thinkers are looking at how we can better use water. If the government persists in rejecting this very sensible piece of water services legislation, I ask that members at least look at the policies put forward by the Garden Industry Alliance and that they try to put in place better programs to manage this scarce resource wisely.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Are you aware that in 2009–10 we had the lowest level of per capita water consumption for Perth over the past eight years?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** In-roads have definitely been made. It would be remiss of us to not recognise that some steps have been taken. We only have to look at the sprinkler restrictions. Some steps have been taken to try to use our water more wisely. That is important to acknowledge. However, the "Water Futures for Western Australia 2008–2030" study concluded that Perth will have a total water use of between 704 gegalitres and 1 002 gegalitres by 2030. I believe members know that if that were the case, there would be a water deficit by 2020. I am not trying to scaremonger when I give members those facts; I am trying to say that we need to recognise that the well may be running dry and that we need to better manage our water supply.

**HON COL HOLT (South West)** [10.46 am]: I wish to make a short contribution to the Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill 2008 debate. Obviously, we are talking about a legislative approach to behaviour change. We are talking about trying to change people's behaviour, either at an individual or corporate level, to use less water. I know that the Minister for Water is bringing forward some legislation to add to the legislative approach to bring about behaviour change. However, I want to relay to members a short story about behaviour change and how it is brought about. Some members may have heard about community-based social marketing. Community-based social marketing is about getting to the final point in a person's decision-making process. It is about determining the final barrier to people making change. Hon Lynn MacLaren has just spoken about the example of a leaky tap. Everyone who sees a leaky tap knows that it is

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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a waste of water, but why do they not change the tap? The decision-making point comes down to the barriers to people changing a leaky tap and that is what community-based social marketing is about; it is another tool used to try to get people to change their behaviour—to change what they are doing. I do not know what the barriers are when it comes to getting a person to change the washer in a leaky tap or repair a leak; however, community-based social marketing tries to explore those final barriers and bring about programs to overcome them.

Although we talk a lot about legislation in this house, in government we know that education is a vital component of behaviour change. We have often talked about that, including, for example, the debate on the graffiti legislation. That was a legislative approach to changing behaviour. We know that while implementing legislative change, we have also to implement educative processes and programs to help diminish the incidence of graffiti. However, I want to tell a story about education and how it is not always the answer. Education does not always bring about the changes that we are looking for. A few years back in North America—it was either in the States or in Canada—programs were run in which people were invited to come along to a workshop to learn more about sustainable living, including reducing water and energy use. The program went for approximately six weeks and looked at identifying some of the barriers and how to educate people to enact sustainable practices. In Canada, insulation blankets are used around hot water systems. The program advised people to turn down their hot water system by two degrees and save themselves \$100 a year—or whatever the saving is. The program ran for six weeks and a heap of people came along and were enthused about making change. Following the program, they analysed how people's behaviour had changed as a result of attending this you-beaut excellent education workshop. They found that not many people at all had turned down their home water heater system. Despite knowing the benefits and despite knowing they should turn the system down, people did not do it. I think they found that only one out of the 30 people who attended had turned down their hot water system. During the program they had talked about low-flow showerheads that save water. They are good for the environment.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** They can stay there twice as long!

**Hon COL HOLT:** Not necessarily. Installing low-flow showerheads is good for the environment and at the same time saves people some money. Everyone who attended the program knew the value of a low-flow showerhead.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** I have them!

**Hon COL HOLT:** Good on you!

After the program, it was found that only two of the 30 participants had installed low-flow showerheads. Even though the education process had —

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich** interjected.

**Hon COL HOLT:** Hang on; there is another kicker to this! Participants in that workshop were given low-flow shower heads to take home with them, but only a very small minority put them on their showers. Even at that last point of, “We have got their behaviour, they are going to take that home”, few actually put the low-flow shower heads on their showers. In the same way that legislation does not always go all the way, education does not either. While in this house we concentrate on the legislation side of things, I think that trying to bring about behavioural changes through education is another important part.

**HON PHILIP GARDINER (Agricultural)** [10.51 am]: I will speak very briefly on the Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill. I did prepare a speech that went into greater depth when this bill was last debated, but I am afraid I am unable to find my notes.

I want to talk a bit about the experience elsewhere. Members all know about the relevance of saving our water. Possibly we are just at the beginning; the current situation could become much worse. I am willing to give attention to any initiative that comes before us because I think it will be very important to consider all the options for making changes in not only metropolitan Western Australian, but also the country. I am not for the legislative tightness that I think is proposed in this bill, but I agree with the sentiment.

New South Wales has had similar problems with water conservation. The NSW government has tackled water conservation in a manner that has brought about a substantial change, despite not being fully across all the elements. It gets back to what my colleague Hon Col Holt just said: the issue is how to introduce behavioural change to make the savings. Sydney's metropolitan water plan is about continued investment, including rebates, business programs and water-efficient technology, to cause a reduction in water use in Sydney and achieve a target saving of 145 billion litres by 2015. That target is about 24 per cent of Sydney's water needs. The last time this bill was debated, members talked about the low-hanging fruit for water saving in Western Australia, especially Perth, having already been picked. We must always go to the next step if we have an outcome that we wish to achieve. In New South Wales, water usage has been broken down into households, business and

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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government. Since 1999, the water authority that manages water supplies to Sydney has reduced water usage by 100 billion litres through the implementation of the metropolitan water plan. That is two-thirds of the 145 billion litres the New South Wales government wants to save. To return to the question posed by Hon Col Holt: how did it do it? The water was saved not through tight legislation, but through incentives and concessions that Sydney Water made to different households. I am not across the details and whether it is up to the government or households to get the plumber in, but the incentives and concessions deal with a number of elements. Conditions apply, but Sydney households can —

- get a plumber to install a water efficient showerhead and fix your leaking taps for just \$22 as part of the WaterFix program
- get a free Water Saving Kit, which could save around nine buckets of water a day

That is quite a lot of water —

- let Sydney Water replace your single-flush toilet with a 4-star, water efficient, dual flush toilet

Maybe most of us already have those in our homes here —

- Install a hot water circulator with your instantaneous gas hot water system and get a rebate of \$150

It goes on. The water authority provides incentives for a number of water-saving measures. In the business sector of Sydney, 24 billion litres of water of the 145 billion-litre target have been saved. The government's use of water is quite interesting because here in Western Australia, although I do not recall the details thoroughly, I believe there was a program in government departments to reduce electricity use by a certain percentage. I recall that the general conclusion was that, apart from about nine departments, everyone failed by a big measure to get anywhere near the target. Here we are in government, meant to be aware of what is going on, but not having the personal discipline or the attention to make a difference.

**Hon Alison Xamon:** By interjection, those departments that did do it did so exceedingly well. It was about how seriously they took it.

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** I think I recall the same point, Hon Alison Xamon. The aim in New South Wales was to reduce government water usage by 15 per cent by 2011. A number of NSW government agencies have been implementing water safety action plans and have reduced water use by 1.7 billion litres. I am afraid I do not know the percentage that equates to, but the government agencies have at least made a substantial reduction when, in the scheme of things, government water use is not a big part of Sydney's overall water use. Water saving is a result of awareness: recognising a problem and doing something about it.

At the end of the day, metropolitan Perth is probably facing the use of greywater, and I suspect there is going to be a lot of resistance to that. I think we need to have preceding programs that, hopefully, will increase the awareness to the point that when we must make a decision about greywater, we are all aware of how acute our problem is.

Without trying to once again paint the regional areas as being something magnificent, I will conclude with the point that the awareness of water use is invariably greater in regional areas. People in regional areas have had to deal with providing their own water facilities, collecting the rainwater themselves and using taps that limit the amount of rainwater that can be used. They are aware of that every time they turn on a tap. In regional Western Australia there is an awareness of the dryness and how to try to deal with it. For example, we all know that in the Wheatbelt there are farms that have water shortages and dams that do not get filled.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! We will interrupt proceedings to observe Remembrance Day as it is 11.00 am on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Would members rise in their places and observe one minute's silence.

[Members stood and observed a minute's silence.]

**Hon PHILIP GARDINER:** I almost hesitate to resume after a minute's silence when I guess it was gatherings such as these that made some of those terrible decisions about war.

However, in the Wheatbelt there are mounds of rocks that are big enough to be collection areas, and the government has supported building dams to collect the run-off from those rocks. Those dams, not a lot of them, are located in different parts of the Wheatbelt to extract that water for use. Merredin, a town that is in the drier part of the Wheatbelt, sucks up a lot of its watertable, which has a salinity level that requires some desalination. It has small desalination plants, as I understand, which feed that water back to the town for its use. Other areas have, of course, much more water and do not have the same focus on it. I live near the towns of Moora and Dandaragan, which is where the Darling escarpment becomes the coastal plain, just west of Moora. There is a lot of underground water that provides a very adequate supply for the town of Moora. However, in the town,

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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people's awareness of water issues is different from those living on properties outside town who have to supply their own water. Therefore, awareness is a major issue. I support enhancing that awareness in whichever way we can, which is why I am for the sentiment of the Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill, but not for the actual practice.

**HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan)** [11.03 am]: I will make a few remarks on the Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill 2008. I have listened intently to members on the other side and it would appear that we have agreement amongst members of the house that we need to reduce the level of water consumption in Western Australia. I was not completely sure about the government's position on that matter, but certainly I think I am making the right assumption that we all accept that Western Australia is a very dry place, particularly in the south-west corner, and that particularly because of climate change, we need to find ways of significantly reducing water consumption. Therefore, we would expect that if that is our agreed position, we would also be prepared to support a bill that seeks to set in place targets for the major water providers in Western Australia to try to achieve and to set in place mechanisms to encourage their consumers to reduce water consumption, which is what this bill does. A much stronger bill could have been brought in that mandated people to reduce their water consumption, but this bill does not do that; it simply sets in place that agencies that provide water are required, as part of their corporate strategies, to work towards encouraging the final consumers of water to reduce their water consumption. That is my understanding of the reading of the legislation. I note that Hon Alison Xamon is indicating by nodding her head, because she does not want to interject in an unruly fashion, which I appreciate, that that is what this bill does. If that is what this bill does, why can we not all agree to it?

**Hon Helen Morton:** Because it is already possible under existing legislation.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Yes, it is already possible but sometimes it is useful to set not even aspirational targets, but targets that give us a roadmap that states that this is what we as a society have to achieve. This keeps the pressure on us. Although the measures in this bill are already achievable and the parliamentary secretary outlined that we have substantially reduced water consumption during the last decade, as my colleague Hon Sally Talbot pointed out, much of that reduction resulted from initiatives that came about through rebates. Hon Philip Gardiner talked about Sydney in his contribution. He talked about the success that Sydney will have because it is using incentives, concessions and rebates, yet the current government got rid of those rebates. We in Western Australia no longer have the sorts of mechanisms, which Hon Philip Gardiner talked about, that encourage people to buy pool blankets and install low-flow showerheads and rainwater tanks. I must say that a rainwater tank is the only measure that I have not taken yet, and I have been getting people round to give me quotes on one because that is the next stage. We all have to do it, and we should say that to companies, such as the Water Corporation. I am not aware of any non-state government-owned enterprises that provide water in Western Australia. If we agree with all of that, if we agree that we want to encourage people to get rid of their old washing machines that are entirely inefficient in their water use and go to the 5-star and 6-star washing machines that have very low water use, surely we can agree that we need to set targets.

If I remember correctly, the parliamentary secretary said that the government had legislation coming in in spring 2010. I do not know about anyone else in this chamber, but I think spring has almost sprung! Are we going to see the legislation before the end of the parliamentary session? No! The parliamentary secretary shrugs her shoulders because either she does not know or she does know that we are not going to see that legislation. We have had the targets and we have had the rebates taken away. We were told that we were going to get legislation but we still have not seen it, even though we are almost at the end of spring 2010. Government members are nodding their heads that they agree with the concept of what the bill tries to achieve, but just do not put in place anything that will add a little more accountability to the mechanisms that will actually make us have to account and report on how we are going in achieving those targets.

Of course, that is what we have heard in the chamber today, but what other information could we as a Parliament look at to determine whether deep in the bowels of the government's thinking it is committed to water conservation and to seeing a reduction? One way is to look in the budget, which shows the revenue that the government expects to get from the Water Corporation. The budget document indicates that the figures are going up. There are two ways that increase could be happening. It could be that the government intends to significantly increase the price of water, which would ultimately potentially be a mechanism for reducing consumption but in a way that would create extreme hardship for large sections of our community. That would be one way the government could do it. It could be that the government also expects that there will be a continual increase in the volume of water being sold. However, we would normally expect that if we are being serious about reducing water consumption, we would accept that the profits of groups such as the Water Corporation would diminish over the forward estimates period, not increase. Let us see —

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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**Hon Helen Morton:** Is that diminishing on a per capita basis?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Let us take a look at the figures first and then we can have a bit of a debate in the chamber about what we think is driving that situation. Is it population, is it price, or is it that we would expect an increase in water consumption? Let us have a look at what the figures show. I will go back to the last budget that was put in place by a Labor government, which was in 2008–09, and the money that it expected to get out of the Water Corporation, which included money from income tax expenses in lieu of the profits that it was making, the local government rates expenses paid in lieu and the dividends that it would collect. When we tally all those figures up, we see that in the 2008–09 budget, the Labor government expected to collect \$564 million from the Water Corporation in 2010–11. That was a reduction from the \$593 million it expected to collect in the 2008–09 financial year. The projected target was going down at that time, even though the population was expected to grow. We can see in the 2010–11 budget, which was produced last year, that the government expects to collect \$636 million from the Water Corporation this year. That is 13 per cent more than what Labor predicted it would get from the Water Corporation back in 2008–09. All members know where that increase has come from. It has come from the government's increase in the fees and charges for water that the families and pensioners of Western Australia must pay.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Hon Robin Chapple said that it was a very important measure.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** He may believe that. I am saying to the parliamentary secretary that enough is enough. It is not a good thing. The government should get its hands out of the pockets of the families and pensioners of Perth through those increased water charges. Get them out! Stop it! It is time to stop. Let us look at the projected figures in the forward estimates for the next four years. The government will get \$636 million this year from the Water Corporation. By 2013, the government expects to collect \$862 million—I repeat, \$862 million—from the Water Corporation. Do members know how much of an increase that is as a percentage? It is a 35 per cent increase. That is an 8.75 per cent increase in profits from the Water Corporation over each of the next four years. That is what the government is predicting in its budget papers. Is that because the government intends to increase the price of water by almost nine per cent per annum for the next four years?

**Hon Helen Morton:** That is based on the ERA figures, isn't it?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** These are the budget figures, parliamentary secretary. Hon Helen Morton is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer; she should tell me what these figures are based on.

**Hon Helen Morton:** You have already heard that that is information based on the Economic Regulation Authority's projections, but the government is yet to make a decision about whether it will or will not implement what the Economic Regulation Authority has said.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It is a fascinating position the government has got itself into when the parliamentary secretary comes into this place and, when she is caught out, proffers the argument that the budget papers the government presented to Parliament should not be believed. That is what the parliamentary secretary has just said to me by way of interjection to try to save her backside when she wears her other hat as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Water. She is asking us to believe her when she tells us about water but to not believe the document she tabled in the house in May this year. That is what the parliamentary secretary said. She is saying, "I know it is written in the documents and that it was provided to the house and that we said we expected to get \$862 million. Yes, we know they are the figures we have provided to the rating agencies to maintain our AAA credit rating because they like to look at what we are projecting over the forward estimates. We have done all those things, but do not believe it! It is actually all wrong. It is all incorrect information. We might as well just tear up the budget papers."

**Hon Norman Moore:** What rubbish!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** That is what is being said, Hon Norman Moore.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It is getting towards the end of the year and we have just a few weeks of scheduled sitting left. I know members are getting tired and they get irritable and sick of other people. The Legislative Council is a debating chamber and everyone has the right to be heard under a set of conditions. Everyone has an obligation to adhere to those rules, which apply to everyone; they are not selective.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** This government cannot have it both ways. It cannot proffer to us in a debate about water targets that the government is on target and is reducing, and intends to continue to reduce, water consumption, while on the other hand it expects to get a 35 per cent increase in revenue from the Water Corporation over the next four years. That certainly will not occur as a result of population growth, but it may

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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occur as a result of price increases or increased water consumption. I put it to the parliamentary secretary that it is a combination of the two. Because the government has done away with the rebates—the sorts of measures Hon Philip Gardiner was imploring the government to implement—we will see an increase in prices and water consumption. I would love the parliamentary secretary to tell us on what basis the government will receive the \$862 million from the Water Corporation in 2013–14. How was that figure arrived at within the Water Corporation? What volume of water does it expect to be selling by 2013–14 to achieve those figures? What method was used to calculate the figures that went into the budget that the parliamentary secretary is now telling us we should disregard? This government tries to be tricky and worm its way out of things when it is caught red-handed. We saw the Premier do that when he was caught red-handed. He said that he was just stating a matter of fact and was not implying anything to the member for Fremantle. Look at other occasions when other people have tried to confuse conversations like that and have been taken before the Corruption and Crime Commission and their conduct has been found to have been improper.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I think the last few comments might have strayed a little from water licensing. Let us continue the debate on the water licensing bill.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I realise that I started to stray because of some of the comments made by members on the other side, and I appreciate you bringing me back into line, Mr President.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Not everything I say from the chair requires a comment in response. If that were the case, we would never get to the end of anything. I ask the member to proceed with his comments on this bill.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I will. I was actually trying to wind up. In light of your earlier comments, Mr President, all I can say is that I neither tire of this place nor get sick of listening to the interjections of the curmudgeon of the Council, because I find him and the way he shows his grumpiness on a daily basis amusing.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The member's comments are irrelevant to the topic before the Chair and I ask him to come back to the bill before the Chair.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** That is where we are at with this government. It says that it supports the principles of the legislation but does not want to have it legislated for because it does not want to be held accountable for the requirement to meet those targets. The government does not want to be held accountable to those targets because it knows that it will not achieve them. We know that because the budget papers show that in 2010–11 the government will get 13 per cent more in dividends from the Water Corporation than it expected to get in 2008–09 and the government intends to increase its dividends from the Water Corporation by 35 per cent over the next four years. That will be done. Even if these figures are based on the Economic Regulation Authority figures that the parliamentary secretary is now telling us to ignore, I am confident that the Water Corporation would expect that the volume of water it sells over the next four years will be similar to the volume it sells today. The Water Corporation does not expect that volume to reduce. The bill expects the population growth target to remain at about 1.5 per cent. On average, the population of Perth grows by about 1.5 per cent, although it has grown by two per cent over a couple of years.

**Hon Helen Morton:** There is a big injection of people coming to Northam.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Mr President, you can understand why I get dragged off the topic so regularly when I get interjections like that.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Ignore the unruly interjections.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It is always difficult to ignore them once they have been placed on the *Hansard* but on this occasion I will ignore the interjection because it was just a trite, childish comment across the chamber that does not deserve a response.

I think that over the last couple of years there has been about a 2.5 per cent increase in the population in the south west corner of the state. That has therefore certainly been a driver, so if we were to achieve 1.5 per cent reduction per head of population, we would say, "Keep using the same amount of water and accommodate that extra growth in population into the water we consume." That should not be too hard. I look forward to the parliamentary secretary giving to us at some point an explanation of those figures in the budget. I suspect they are based on both significant increases in water fees and charges for families and pensioners; and, secondly, that there is no intention of achieving that reduction in the volume of water that is being used in Western Australia and that it will continue to increase. That is a very sad state of affairs. It is like the way I recall someone described climate change. If people go out to play a one-day cricket game and wait until the last 10 overs to score all their runs, it becomes a very difficult task. The way the government must deal with these

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Deputy President

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measures is to get out there and, from the first ball faced, take every opportunity. There might be an opportunity for a single run or there might be an opportunity to hit the ball to the boundary, but those opportunities must be taken as they come up to keep pushing along the run rate and eventually achieve a good score or beat the opponent's score. That is what we should be doing both with climate change and with water: getting out there and taking every opportunity. We have seen this government already giving up the fours that have been won by the rebates, which are the sorts of things its own coalition colleagues have said to this chamber earlier today are necessary to achieve the reduction, incentives and rebates. The government has already given up some of the single runs that could be taken from that. Yes, it could do the other things that it is doing. However, this bill would actually keep the pressure on the government to achieve those incentives, but it does not support the bill because it does not want to keep the pressure on, as it has no intention of achieving those incentives, and the budget papers prove it.

**HON LJILJANNA RAVLICH (East Metropolitan)** [11.22 am]: I am pleased to also rise to speak on this Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment Bill. The opposition has already put on the public record that we support it with some amendments that I understand are acceptable and will be considered by the Greens (WA).

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm)**: Order! Members, there are only eight minutes remaining for debate today on this bill and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich does have the floor.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH**: I went back to have a look at the government's election commitment in relation to this issue of water, as I thought it was important to go back to what this government —

**Hon Nick Goiran**: What did you do in 2007?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH**: No, I am going back. But I am going to take members back to 2005 to the Liberal government's commitment to this growing problem which, in my view, will end up as a crisis for this government. The Liberal government's election commitment was to allocate \$250 000 to commission an independent —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT**: Order! I ask Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to take her seat for a second or two. Members, in all seriousness, there are still at least two weeks' sitting remaining prior to the end of the year, and at this particular rate we are going to end up hurling too much abuse at each other; and that is something that I am not prepared to stand in this place. I have asked for members' cooperation to give the member a chance. There are only six or so minutes remaining today. Debate on this bill will continue, and I would ask members again to give their attention to the member, and I would like her, of course, to direct, as she always would, her comments through the Chair.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH**: Thanks very much, Mr Deputy President. I do not really want to have to raise my voice in this debate.

The government put on the public record that it would allocate \$250 000 to commission an independent, science-based review of desalination plant proposals for Wellington Dam. The review would be supported by the Department of Environment and Conservation to ensure any proposals are consistent with the principles of sustainable development. Then the commitment outlined a second desal plant and said that the government would continue with the proposed construction of a second desalination plant—I do not know where the money is in the budget for that—recycling and aquifer recharge sustainability, catchment management and water table management. But the only funding allocation has been this \$250 000 to commission this independent report.

Given the importance of this issue, how could the Premier have delivered to the public of Western Australia an election policy commitment in such an important area with only \$250 000? When I go back to 2005, I see that this is when the Premier considered that this matter was very critical. At the 2005 state election the now Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, proposed the construction of a canal from the rivers of the Kimberley ranges in northern Western Australia to Perth to meet Perth's growing water supply problem.

Do members remember the canal? It was colloquially referred to as the F-A-R—I put that on the public record—canal.

**Hon Norman Moore**: You really are very clever and very funny! You're just so amusing! We're all rolling around laughing!

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH**: No, I am drawing a parallel. Why was this such an important issue in 2005 that the Premier then proposed an initiative that was estimated to cost \$2 billion in Australian dollars? Of course, we

Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Helen Morton.; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Col Holt; Hon Philip Gardiner; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich; Deputy President

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all remember that it emerged he had not done any costing in relation to the F-A-R canal and some experts put the cost of this canal, which was going to solve —

**Hon Norman Moore:** It was a bit similar to a minister in the previous Labor government, namely Ernie Bridge. Do you remember Ernie Bridge's pipeline? Have you forgotten about it?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Look! I said I do not want to raise my voice and I do not want to have to say it again.

**Hon Norman Moore:** I know because you're not listening to an interjection you can't cope with.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Ha, ha! I just love it. I love it when the Leader of the House gets himself worked up. Now I will give him a bit of advice.

**Hon Norman Moore:** Remember Ernie Bridge?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Take a Bex and have a lie down!

Mr Deputy President, some experts actually anticipated that the cost of this canal, bringing the water south from the Kimberley to the metropolitan area would cost in the order of \$5 billion. Members might remember this state of sad affairs, because what then happened was the then Prime Minister, John Howard, said, "Well, we're not going to give you any money for it." And of course the whole thing ended up being a disaster.

**Hon Norman Moore:** And you nearly lost the election over it, so just be very careful about what you say about that.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** It was an absolute disaster for the now Premier.

**Hon Norman Moore:** And I suspect that if you had an opinion poll, you would find most would agree with it.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Here he goes again! Take a Bex and have a lie down!

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Members, I am trying to listen.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I can hardly hear myself because the Leader of the House is so worked up over there!

**Hon Norman Moore:** I guess you'd be pleased about that!

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order, members! Members, in all seriousness, there are two minutes remaining for this non-government business debate. Please let us forget about any extra discourse with each other, or anyone else for that matter, and I reiterate my previous two requests for the remainder of this particular session that members listen to the member in silence. If I keep talking, of course, that will be the end of the debate, but I do not want that. I want members to take on board what the member is saying. There is plenty of time for members to have their say afterwards in coming weeks.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Thanks, Mr Deputy President. I raised that only as a point of comparison. What is it that makes the Premier in 2005 want to spend anywhere from \$2 billion to \$5 billion to find a water solution for the state, particularly to bring the water to the metropolitan area, yet when this same Premier goes to the election in 2008 the best he can put up for probably the number one issue dealing with water, specifically for the ongoing viability of Western Australia, is a commitment valued at \$250 000? What brings about such a change in a man? I have no idea what it is or what is the thinking behind this total lack of commitment to water-related issues at the last election by this Premier and this government. It is very disappointing that we find ourselves in this position. Unfortunately, I have only 34 minutes left in which to speak and I will not be able to unpack all of this today. The next time this motion is before us, I look forward to exploring what happened in 2005. Hon Norman Moore would naturally remember it because he gets himself very excited about it. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to explore this issue.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to temporary orders.