

YANCHEP NATIONAL PARK — DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2010

Motion

Resumed from 28 March on the following motion moved by Mr J.R. Quigley —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its neglect of Yanchep National Park, its failure to finalise the Yanchep National Park draft management plan of 2010 and its failure to implement the recommendations contained therein.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [4.02 pm]: In this debate I follow the member for Mindarie, who did an absolutely sterling job in bringing to the attention of the house the issues affecting his electorate, in particular the parks and reserves of Yanchep National Park. The issues identified in the “Parks and Reserves of Yanchep and Neerabup: Draft Management Plan 2010”, of which I have a copy, have still not been addressed. The wetlands continue to dry out and damage is being done to the environment. The Yanchep caves continue to dry out and are kept alive only for tourism purposes; water is pumped into the caves where once there were natural streams and natural water flows. These are critical issues for tourism in Western Australia, the Yanchep National Park and the member for Mindarie. He is quite right to highlight these issues and bring them to the attention of the house.

When the member for Mindarie was on his feet some weeks ago talking about the Yanchep reserve and associated reserves such as Neerabup, he made the point that the significant impact on those reserves and the aquifer that feeds those reserves comes from the broader problem facing the Gngangara mound aquifer. The aquifer stretches out and covers the Yanchep and Neerabup areas; it is the source of water for the wetlands of the Yanchep and Neerabup reserves and the water that finds its way into the cave system of Yanchep. I intend to concentrate on the underlying issue for the member for Mindarie, who is attempting to protect and defend the environment around his electorate in Yanchep. The underlying issue is what is happening to the Gngangara mound. I am very interested to know whether the member for Wanneroo is going to make any contribution.

Mr P.T. Miles: I am indeed.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We would like to hear exactly what the member for Wanneroo has to say about defending and protecting the Gngangara mound. When I have been in the electorate of the member for Wanneroo, talking to residents, his own constituents —

Mr P.T. Miles: I understand you got lost!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I did not get lost. I do not know who the member for Wanneroo is talking about, but he is not talking about me. I got to meet a significant number of the member for Wanneroo’s constituents. I discovered from the member’s constituents that he is very, very silent on the future of the Gngangara mound. It does not surprise me that his constituents say that because, as we in this chamber all know, the member for Wanneroo is a very silent person. I can count on one hand the number of times the member for Wanneroo has spoken in this chamber. I can understand that as backbenchers they are treated as mushrooms and told to sit there and shut up and let the legislation pass through; they are told, “Do not say anything. Just sit there.”

Mr J.M. Francis: I am such a shrinking violet!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member for Jandakot says he is “such a shrinking violet”. The member for Jandakot shrieks and carries on in this chamber to get noticed because, if he did not, we would not hear anything from the member for Jandakot. As the member for Jandakot knows, he is brought into line by his frontbench on regular occasions. Frontbenchers say to the member for Jandakot, “Just sit there and shut up. Shut up and let us get on with the business of government.”

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Is that what you call it?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They claim to call it the business of government.

We have all been in the same situation as the member for Jandakot. It is not new; that is just the way it is. As I said, I am very interested to hear exactly what the normally silent member for Wanneroo has to say about the state of the Gngangara mound; what he intends to take to the next election in his defence of the Gngangara mound; and his ideas for protecting the Gngangara mound. His speech will be illuminating. I cannot wait to hear it, because so far successive water ministers in this state have done diddly-squat to protect the Gngangara mound. Successive conservative ministers have done nothing. They have talked a lot, but they have done nothing. I take members back to 2008 when Mr Chris Tallentire, who now happens to sit in this chamber, was the director of the Conservation Council of Western Australia. He is an outstanding contributor to parliamentary debate. An article in *The West Australian* of 7 February 2008 states that Chris Tallentire —

... welcomed the department’s move —

That is the Department of Water —

towards an adaptive allocation system but criticised its failure to act earlier in reducing the overall draw on the mound.

As we will hear from the former Conservation Council director, even back in 2008 there were major concerns about the draw on the Gngangara mound; those concerns continue. There is a big difference between what happened prior to the election of the conservative Liberal–National government and what happened after. The work that was done on the Gngangara mound prior to August 2008 was research to identify the capacity, drawdown and recharge of the Gngangara mound system. All that research work was done over a period of 10 years or more to identify exactly how Perth’s main source of drinking water works. All that work was done in the decade before July 2009.

Mr W.R. Marmion: It is ongoing.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Of course, minister, it is ongoing, but a significant amount of that work was done in the decade before July 2009. Of course, July 2009 was during the period of office of the Liberal–National government. I pick the date of July 2009 because that is when the Gngangara sustainability strategy, which had been initiated by the Labor government and drafted primarily under the term of the Labor government, came to completion. The research work had been done on the sustainability strategy under the term of the Gallop–Carpenter Labor government. It was published for comment in July 2009 with a great deal of fanfare by the then Minister for Water, Dr Graham Jacobs. The Gngangara mound sustainability strategy contained a significant number of recommendations. It also had a huge amount of information in its appendices about the Gngangara mound aquifer and the impact of declining rainfall and the impact of water draw on the Gngangara mound. The strategy identified that groundwater storage had decreased by 700 gegalitres over 20 years because of declining rainfall; that is, 700 billion litres of water, which would normally have been there, had basically disappeared from its storage system as a result of declining rainfall. That decline in the capacity of the mound was continuing to occur and continues to occur.

Nevertheless, over that time, because of the growth of the population of Perth and the growth in the demand for water, our water draw on Gngangara mound had increased to the point at which there was and is overuse of that aquifer by billions of litres of water. It was identified in *The West Australian* again on 6 September 2010. As a result of the analysis of the bore monitoring program that had been put in place under the Gallop administration, a number of bore owners had volunteered to have water meters installed on the bores.

Mr A.P. Jacob: Voluntarily?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They did volunteer.

Mr A.P. Jacob: I know, which begs the start of, I think, a bit of commentary.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The whole point is they had meters. They volunteered to the program. They had meters installed at no cost to them.

Mr A.P. Jacob: True, but what about the ones who were not volunteering?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: What is the problem? I cannot see what the issue is. It was a program that was designed to analyse the draw on the Gngangara aquifer. It was a paid program in which the people who were involved in it did not have to put their hand in their pocket. I thought that was pretty good. As a result of analysing the data that came out of it, we found a significant breach to the licensed water allocations by a significant number of licence holders on the Gngangara mound. In one case an unnamed council had overused its allocated entitlement by 1.1 gegalitres of water—1.1 billion litres of water.

Mr J.M. Francis: Name them.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I think I know which it is. I cannot be sure which it is, member for Jandakot, but maybe the member for Wanneroo can get up and explain, if he knows. It is certainly not in this article that is in front of me. I certainly have only a rough idea of who it could be. Perhaps the member for Wanneroo or even the minister can stand in the house and tell us which unnamed council overused its allocated entitlement by 1.1 gegalitres—we are not talking about a few litres of water.

Mr J.M. Francis: That would fill this room.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It would fill more than this room, member for Jandakot; it would fill half of Subiaco Oval. It is a significant amount of water.

At the time, I implored the then water minister, Graham Jacobs, to not walk away from that metering program but in fact to expand it to try to cover as many as possible of the 5 006 licence holders who have licences to draw water from the Gngangara mound. The reason I argued for that is that Gngangara mound is Perth’s well. It is our

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

main point source of drinking water in Western Australia. It is soon probably to be eclipsed by desalinated water, but at this time it is the main point source of drinking water in Perth.

The response from the then Minister for Water, Graham Jacobs, was to abandon that water metering program. It was never reinstated, it was never expanded and it was never followed up. It is not just the fact that the minister released the sustainability strategy, in which the dangers of what he was facing from the damage to the Gngangara mound were clearly evident and before him; what is of more concern is that he did not address any of those issues at that time. Even though it was a draft sustainability strategy, there were some critical things in it, and he never addressed any of them.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Not only did he not address any of those critical issues, but also even the more minor assessments of the impact of the Gngangara mound were abandoned, such as the water monitoring program.

The other concern I have of the assessment of the Gngangara mound by the metering program and the subsequent questions in the upper house about the impact of those organisations and those licence holders who overdraw on the Gngangara mound is that the Department of Water has issued no fines against any organisation, individual or water licence holder who has breached their allocated limit from the Gngangara mound. Not one fine has been issued against them.

If members want to know how much water has been taken, I refer to this article from *The West Australian* of 5 March this year about the Gngangara mound being in trouble. In that article, which is headed "Bore users ignore water supply limits", there is a little box, in which there are the following words —

DID YOU KNOW?

17.3

billion litres was taken from the Gngangara mound by 169 licensees in 2010–11, more than twice their collective allocated limit.

In 2010–11, 17.3 billion litres of water, or about one-third the annual output of the Kwinana desalination plant, was taken illegally by water licence holders on the Gngangara mound. What was the response from this government? Absolutely nothing. Were any breaches issued? No. Were any fines issued? No.

Mr J.R. Quigley: What did the member for Wanneroo do about that? Nothing!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Did the member for Wanneroo respond to this article? No. Did he say that he thinks it is disgraceful that people are effectively stealing 17.4 billion litres of water out of Perth's well and getting away with it? No. He made no comment whatsoever. That is why I am waiting for the member for Wanneroo to stand in this chamber and say something about the disgraceful affair of people stealing water from the Gngangara mound and getting away with it.

Mr P.T. Miles: You're misleading the house!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member for Wanneroo should get up and show how, because what I am doing, unlike the member, is quoting from published sources. If the member for Wanneroo has any other sources to back up his claim, he should get up and do it; otherwise, he will find himself in front of the privileges committee! Okay? If the member for Wanneroo wants to start interjecting on me, he should get up and back up what he has just said.

Mr P.T. Miles: I will be getting up. Why don't you sit down so that I can get up?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We will wait for him. We will wait and see.

Mr J.M. Francis: Stop being a bully!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member for Jandakot does not have to defend him.

Mr J.M. Francis interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Just stop interjecting! I am talking to the member for Wanneroo, not the member for Jandakot. I am talking to the organ-grinder, not the monkey. He can respond. As I say, the member for Wanneroo can get up and defend his own electorate, if he can. He can defend what is happening to the most important thing in his own electorate —

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: — instead of simply interjecting with silly little statements.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the second time.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 23 May 2012]

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Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

Mr F.M. LOGAN: As I have pointed out, continued illegal actions are being taken by licence holders in overdrawing their water allocations on the Gngangara mound, at a time when the Gngangara mound's overall water levels are falling—they are falling dramatically, and they are falling consistently. On top of that, we have the drawdown by the government itself through the Water Corporation. What the Gngangara mound sustainability strategy suggested was that the drawdown by the Water Corporation on the Gngangara mound for drinking water should initially go to 110 gigitalitres and then gradually be phased down to 80 gigitalitres. Last financial year, 2011–12, the Minister for Water signed off on the ability for the Water Corporation to increase its draw on the Gngangara mound to 163 billion litres. This government was told in July 2009 that the then drawdown, which was 137 gigitalitres, was unsustainable and it should be reduced to 110 gigitalitres immediately—which is why I cannot understand why the then Minister for Water, Graham Jacobs, did not take that advice and just do it—and then be phased down gradually to 80 gigitalitres. That is what the strategy said in July 2009. Last year, that went to 163 gigitalitres, signed off by the current Minister for Water.

If we look at the picture that I have just painted, we have an aquifer under pressure because of declining rainfall. Its holding capacity has declined by 700 billion litres of water in the last 20 years. We have an overdraw by the Water Corporation on the drawdown recommended in the sustainability strategy. That strategy is based on significant scientific analysis of that aquifer. We also have the continued practice of theft of water and overdraw by other licence holders on the Gngangara mound. So, we have three massive impacts on the Gngangara Mound—one from the meteorological impact, with the declining rainfall; one from the Water Corporation, which is overdrawing on its own drinking water supplies; and one from the licence holders, who not only take what they are allocated to take, but take 17.3 billion litres more than what they are licensed to take. It is no wonder, member for Mindarie, that the caves in Yanchep are drying out. It is no wonder that the wetlands in Yanchep National Park are under threat. It is no wonder that the wetlands in the northern suburbs are being damaged. Of course they are going to be damaged if the main point source of water is being impacted upon in three different ways—by the environment and rainfall, by the Water Corporation, and by theft of water through the overdraw by licence holders. It is no wonder that this environmental damage is taking place.

The Gngangara sustainability strategy contains a series of recommendations. But they come at a cost. At the briefing that I had from the Department of Water, which was not long after the release of the draft Gngangara sustainability strategy in 2009, it was indicated to me that the total cost of implementing the recommendations in that strategy would be \$340 million. That is how much it would cost in 2009 to implement the recommendations in the draft sustainability strategy. Is it any wonder that from July 2009 until today, we have had no movement on completing the sustainability strategy? That is not surprising, member for Mindarie, because there is a bit of a hook in there that the government does not want to face. That hook is \$340 million. That is the reason that the strategy is not finished. There is a cost to it.

Mr J.R. Quigley: They have to borrow to start a future fund for 20 years' time, by which time we won't have any water to drink!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is exactly right, member for Mindarie. The government is planning to put up a future fund, which is like setting up a future fund using a credit card—borrowing to pay for the future fund; meanwhile, Perth's major point source of water, Perth's well—the Gngangara mound—is being trashed by the Water Corporation and the licence holders in the northern suburbs! It is being trashed, and we know that it will cost the government \$340 million to fix it, or at least to go some way to fixing it. However, do not worry about that: “We have more important things to do with our money. We have a waterfront to build, we have a stadium to build, and we have a future fund to establish. We don't worry about silly little things like drinking water out of Perth's major point source of drinking water—the Gngangara mound!” Don't worry about that!

Mr W.R. Marmion: Of course we do; of course we do.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The minister can get up in a minute and tell us how much money he has managed to get as the water minister for saving the Gngangara mound. I am not talking about the recharge program; I am talking about implementing any of the recommendations that are listed in the sustainability strategy. The minister can tell this house how much money he has been able to get from the Treasurer and how much money he has been able to spend on saving this important water source.

MR P.T. MILES (Wanneroo) [4.32 pm]: I must say that I have never heard so much tripe coming out of the member for Cockburn in all the time I have been in this house. What just came out of the member for Cockburn is absolute nonsense. I cannot believe that the member for Mindarie would allow him to accuse all of his farmers along that eastern corridor of being thieves for stealing water. I can assure the member for Mindarie that those people up there will be formally notified by our new candidate that the Labor Party accused all of them of stealing and being thugs and thieves. They were very good supporters of the member for Mindarie, but the member just blew it.

A member interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: Yes, he did; so there goes the member for Mindarie. Welcome to Wanneroo, member.

Gnangara mound has always been a huge issue not only for the Wanneroo electorate, but also for the electorates of Mindarie, Kingsley and others. It is an issue of extreme importance. I go back a little stage, because this really came up as a big issue back in the 1990s under the previous Liberal government. The then ministers made some tough decisions and started looking after the caves at Yanchep National Park, which is where this motion originated from because the member for Quigley—I mean Mindarie —

Several members interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: It would be dreadful if it was the member for Quigley! The member for Mindarie brought on the issue of the caves at the national park, and there was also the infamous photograph. He had to get his private member's bill up so he aligned himself with the local rag up there, and there was a photo taken of him standing in a bit of mud with his boots on. Unfortunately, the member for Mindarie has never cared about Yanchep at all, and he has never cared about the national park in any sense; otherwise, he would have been in this house long before six weeks ago making an issue of it.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: He would have been having a go at the former Labor parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Water Resources, the member for Cockburn, and telling him to stop pulling water out of Gnangara mound. The member for Cockburn has actually misled this house because there are not 540 licence users in the Gnangara aquifer at all.

Mr F.M. Logan: I did not say that.

Mr P.T. MILES: Yes, the member did.

Mr F.M. Logan: That just shows how stupid you are! Why don't you go and just walk across the road there and ask the minister who holds the licences?

Mr P.T. MILES: The member did say that and he misled the house. There are not that many. The only corporations or organisations that I am aware of that draw out of the Gnangara mound are the Department of Water and the Water Corporation. Therefore, there are not 540, member; there is none at all! So the member for Cockburn has misled the house!

Mr F.M. Logan: That shows what you know—nothing!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members! Member for Wanneroo, unless you want interjections, do not goad people on the other side, as the Speaker said earlier today. I will give you the opportunity to make your speech. Member for Cockburn, you just be a little quieter. As the Speaker said earlier today, if you goad people on the other side of the house, expect to get something back.

Mr P.T. MILES: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker—and very rightly so.

As I was saying earlier, the Gnangara mound is a vital piece —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the second time today.

Mr P.T. MILES: I am going to go back a little further and talk about it from the Wanneroo perspective, which, for me, started with Lake Gnangara. I remember that I used to go sailing on Lake Gnangara when I was around 18 years old. It was a boating lake that we all used that has now pretty much dried up. It dried up a lot under the former Labor government, but that government did not do anything to pump water back into it. All it is now is a very shallow mudflat.

Mr J.M. Francis: The carbon tax will sort it out!

Mr P.T. MILES: That is what the carbon tax is for—and they believe in that!

Lake Gnangara, which was one of the first lakes in our area, has dried out, and most Wanneroo residents were quite shocked to see it go. Then investigations were put into place and everybody realised that the 18 000 hectares of pine trees were contributing to the amount of water being taken from the area. The Gnangara Lake system was the first to go down. The Court government decided to start pumping water into Yangebup Lake, and five gigalitres a month are pumped into that to keep it up to a level so that it will not dry out. That is done to protect the environment, the birds and other wildlife, and a heap of land was purchased around that area to start saving that environment. That has proved to be quite successful, and today people can walk around the lake. There are no longer any private landholdings that go into the lake, as used to be the case. That progress has been ongoing. Also, Mariginiup Lake no longer completely dries out.

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

A really good plus is that because we are pulling down the pine plantation, which I understand the member for Mindarie does not like either —

Mr F.M. Logan: Yes, he does; we were the government that started it! Who put the plant up there? He would not even know what was going on!

Mr P.T. MILES: We are actually pulling those down a lot faster than was the original intent on two grounds: the first is the European house borer, which has been an issue up in our area; the second is water.

Priority 1 groundwater is another issue we have to address, which we are looking at. Priority 1 groundwater must be about three metres below the surface, which pretty much takes in all of Gngangara pine plantation, which abuts Neaves Road, right the way through to Gngangara Road between my Wanneroo electorate and the electorate of Swan Hills, which is Ellenbrook. It is a huge area that has nearly all been forested by the forestry department to actually try to start reclaiming some of that as a recharge area once again. We know that the camouflage of the pines did not allow a certain amount of water through, and that plantation was actually quite a bad decision way back when they were originally planted. We looked at the shallow aquifer bore holders out there. Most of our food comes from the good farmers, including Vietnamese farmers, who grow many light vegetables such as strawberries, cucumbers and tomatoes, as well as from the more heavily industrialised growers, who are the original farmers of the area right through to Nowergup. These are the people the member for Cockburn has consistently accused of stealing water.

Mr F.M. Logan: I said “licence holder” and, in fact, councils as well. You know about that. Why don’t you tell us?

Mr P.T. MILES: The City of Wanneroo was not accused of stealing water.

Mr F.M. Logan: Do you know who was?

Mr P.T. MILES: Yes, I do.

Mr F.M. Logan: Why don’t you tell the house?

Mr P.T. MILES: The member for Cockburn can tell the house; it is his story, not mine.

Mr F.M. Logan: I don’t know, and I said that I didn’t know.

Mr P.T. MILES: Go and do some homework!

Mr F.M. Logan: I said you might know.

Mr P.T. MILES: Clearly the member is too lazy.

Mr F.M. Logan: Why don’t you tell us? Tell us!

Mr P.T. MILES: I do not need to name the council.

Mr F.M. Logan: You’re gutless! The member for Jandakot wants to know. Why don’t you tell him? He will stand up and say it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members, I do not know how many times I have to tell you—member for Cockburn, do not interject; member for Wanneroo, talk to the Chair, not the member for Cockburn, otherwise it will be a free-for-all.

Mr P.T. MILES: I will speak to the Chair because we might get somewhere.

It is interesting that the Gngangara mound has been under heavy stress during the time of past governments of both persuasions. Both parties when in government have done the right thing and made the right decisions. The Minister for Water has some fairly good news regarding some of our water. I hope we get a lot more rain in this winter break. I think the member for Cockburn is right; we have a drying climate and it is an issue. However, I do not believe that our farmers are drawing too much water from the Gngangara mound. We need two things in life: one is food and the other is water, and they have to be managed and controlled efficiently.

Mr J.M. Francis: Speak for yourself! I have a few more things I need.

Mr P.T. MILES: They are the two basic things we need.

Other issues have been raised today. We all know that there is more than one aquifer. Recently I looked at three aquifers when I visited the Beenyup plant with the Minister for Water. There is a great map there that members should look at as it clearly shows the superficial aquifer that everyone, including mums and dads and farmers, draw from. Underneath that aquifer, the map shows the Gngangara aquifer, which is where Perth’s drinking water comes from. The water from that aquifer goes into the mix to make up our drinking water. Underneath that aquifer, we have the Yarragadee mound, which extends to the Wanneroo electorate. There are two bores at the back of Wanneroo that are drawn on occasionally, although the Water Corporation has been switching off some

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

of its bores at the back of Wanneroo. The department explained the terminology to me, but its bores have not been able to get the water back to the bore hole quickly enough to keep drawing on it, so it has switched off those bores and is allowing water in that area to begin to rise. Because the pine trees are being lopped at a very good rate, we hope to be able to lift that ban. The advice from local people in the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Water is that over time—it will never get back to what it was originally—the water level will rise a couple of metres over about 10 years.

Members referred to the Gngangara caves earlier. Most people who attended a primary school in Western Australia would have visited those caves. The cave system is one of the main attractions that schoolchildren visit. I remember visiting the caves when they were filled with quite deep water. It was good to walk through those caves. I visited the caves again last year and was disappointed to see a pond inside. That has happened because we have not had a good amount of rainfall. The caves are not only fed from the top, but a little bit of water comes up from below; there are stalagmites, and the stalactites that hang down—I did do some chemistry. It will be good, and I know that the government has spent money on the park to recharge the water in those caves.

I would like to point out that some of the problems we are having in some of the waterways and lakes around the northern corridor are caused by a build-up of silt. A lot of the older farmers, the pioneer farmers, have said that Lake Joondalup used to empty into the underground caves and the farmers would re-use the water every year.

Mr A.P. Jacob: Before the quarries in Edgewater.

Mr P.T. MILES: That is right. The quarries are now part of the Edgewater building estate.

That was done years ago, so that water could be used. Maybe the member for Gosnells, in his former scientific role for the Conservation Council, can tell us about the issue of the silt build-up. Does some very shallow dredging need to be done in some parts to try to keep some of the water there and to stop it from draining away completely? Through the Water Corporation, the Department of Water consistently monitors its bores. I have been to the control room at the back of Wanneroo and have seen that the mound is very heavily monitored when the water is drawn on. I think this government has done the right thing over the last three years in office. The draft “Gngangara Sustainability Strategy” was laid down in 2009. It is still a draft and is still out there, but I understand that most of the recommendations in that draft have been implemented. Obviously we can always do more. Although money was not allocated to continue the study so that it could be called the “Gngangara sustainability study”, I do not think the study will ever finish because it is a moving feast; the water will always rise and fall.

One of the big improvements by this government to the Gngangara mound specifically—I am not referring to the shallow aquifer on top of that—is the recharge system that was a plan of the previous government. We actually enacted it and paid for it. I understand that the study has been very successful. That system will recharge a good deal of water back into the Gngangara aquifer. I will not say that it will “fill up” the Gngangara mound, because that is not the intention; the intention of the recharge is to create a damming effect of recycled water near the coast so that the fresh water that comes down from Gingin will back-up behind that water and lift up the watertable. I think that is the hydrologists’ plans for it. As the member for Cockburn said, the science behind that is very technical and detailed.

We all know that the climate is drying. Minister Logan—as he was then—was the Minister for Water Resources between 2001 to 2003; he extracted 148.9 gigalitres of water in 2001 —

Mr F.M. Logan: Who?

Mr P.T. MILES: —and 136 gigalitres, an increase of 146 gigalitres —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Mr P.T. MILES: Minister for Water Resources from 2001 to 2003.

Mr F.M. Logan: No, you’ve got the wrong person. I was a parliamentary secretary.

Mr P.T. MILES: Clearly somebody was misleading.

Mr F.M. Logan: Yes, you! You’re the one misleading the house. I was like you, a backbencher!

Mr P.T. MILES: The member should have stayed there!

The abstraction of Gngangara groundwater has been very well managed under this government. Abstraction from the Gngangara mound will decrease over the coming years. I know that this government has spent a lot of money on the desalination plants in Binningup, and I know that the Minister for Water can fill us in on that. We have a lot of priority 1 groundwater areas that have been purchased by the Department of Planning. They have all been

locked up so that nothing can happen with them, to keep our water clean, but I think we should not be blaming farmers and accusing them of stealing water, as members opposite have done. It is a bit of a sham for the Labor Party to go out there and start buddying up to a group of people out in the back blocks of Wanneroo, to try to get a couple of extra votes for its local Labor candidate.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [4.52 pm]: I am very pleased to rise in support of the motion moved by the member for Mindarie. I acknowledge that the motion reflects a matter of grave concern for the member in his electorate and also, I believe, for other members. It really relates to the finalisation of the Yanchep National Park draft management plan—turning it into a final management plan, with its recommendations being embraced by government. I note that in discussions so far, there has been much consideration of the document put out in July 2009, the “Gnangara Sustainability Strategy”. The member for Wanneroo has mentioned this document, but I wonder whether he can cite one recommendation from it that has been implemented so far. I realise that the member for Wanneroo is not in his seat, but perhaps it would be appropriate if he were so that he could respond. He has made some comments and got a fair number of facts wrong. I am waiting to hear whether he is aware of any recommendations from the “Gnangara Sustainability Strategy” that have been implemented.

Mr W.R. Marmion: He mentioned the pine trees in his speech.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The steady felling of the pine trees? I thank the Minister for Environment; he has helped out the member for Wanneroo.

I will correct a few other points that the member for Wanneroo made. He seems to question what should really be termed the illegal extraction of water. When it comes to water, we tend to use the term “abstraction”; I do not know why that is the case, and I have heard Professor Pierre Horwitz from Edith Cowan University make this point also. There is something in the language of “abstraction” that is trying to soften the idea—it is not the same as “extraction”. We are extracting from a precious resource; as the member for Cockburn has said, we rely on the Gnangara mound to a very great extent for our water supply. It is true that perhaps in years to come the percentage of water coming from the desalination plants will start to rival what we get from the Gnangara mound, but it is fair to say that in recent years we have been reliant upon the Gnangara mound for about 70 per cent of our water supply. If members take the glass of water in front of them as an example, they could say that somewhere between 60 per cent and 70 per cent of the water comes from the Gnangara mound. That is an indication of how precious this groundwater resource is to us. We need to realise that people are using some of that water for food production, but using it in a very inefficient manner. I am sure that members from the northern suburbs will have had the opportunity to travel around the northern suburbs and look at some of the horticultural production practices there. Not only are those people using water in excess of their water licences, and going way beyond them, but they are also using water in a very inefficient manner. One has only to drive around on a hot summer’s day and see the sort of sprinkler use that is going on there, and one can see that it is not an efficient use of that precious resource. I would like members opposite to address that point. We need to be —

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: When did the member last drive along Pinjar Road or any of those roads? Has he driven up there lately? No? If he did not drive around up there this summer, he would not have seen the problem at its source.

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I am saying that we need to ensure that those people are not wasting the water. They are putting sprinklers on in the middle of the day on crops that are —

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member for Ocean Reef!

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Ocean Reef, I call you to order for the first time. You will have an opportunity to speak.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I think the point is clear: we are talking about the efficient use of that water supply.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The member for Kalgoorlie is an expert on this, is he?

Several members interjected.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 23 May 2012]

p3098b-3115a

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! I call the member for Kalgoorlie to order for the first and second time. I call the member for North West to order for the first and second time. When the Speaker is on his feet, you do not speak.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Member for Gosnells, I was agreeing with you 100 per cent!

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call the member for Kalgoorlie to order for the second time.

Mr J.J.M. Bowler: Third time!

The ACTING SPEAKER: One more time, and you are back on the highway, okay? Three times; I am not as generous as the Speaker. When someone gets four calls, member for Kalgoorlie, they are on their bike.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I acknowledge that the member for Kalgoorlie was agreeing with my comment that we clearly need to address the problem of inefficient water use. At the same time, we need to address the problem of people using water in excess of the amount that is allowed through their water licence. I think I heard the member for Wanneroo say that he was not aware of any other licences on the Gngangara mound. There are at least 169 licences, and those people have been using water above their entitlements such that we have overdrawn about 17 gigalitres of water a year. Why is the management of the Gngangara mound so important to the motion before the house, which is a call for the draft management plan for the parks and reserves of Yanchep and Neerabup to be turned into a final management plan? Yanchep National Park —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, I have given you two or three chances to stop talking. If you want to talk, go outside, otherwise I will call you to order.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The motion before the house calls on the government to bring into effect the Yanchep National Park draft management plan, which is critical to the preservation of the Yanchep cave system. I am disappointed that not much mention has been made of this so far, but the aquatic ecosystems and the flora and fauna of the Yanchep caves are dependent on that water and they have been there, I would say, for many millions of years. Unfortunately, they are under threat because of natural climate variability, human-induced climate change and over-extraction of water in more recent years. The over-extraction has been for human water supply, horticultural activity and garden usage in some cases. All those things combine to mean that we have been overdrawing on this precious reserve and, as the member for Cockburn said, we are about 700 gigalitres down on what the total reserve of the Gngangara mound should have. It is the same as if we put a straw in a glass of water and sucked out water from the bottom—the water level would drop. There is a bit of an idea around that if we take water from superficial aquifers, it will not damage things further down; or if we take water from deep down, it will not have an impact on the superficial aquifers. In fact if we take water from deep down, it drops the whole system down, and that means that these groundwater ecosystems are put at risk. The state has had to keep these systems on life support. We have been pumping water into the caves to keep enough water there to enable the species in those groundwater ecosystems to stay alive. They have been on life support for a number of years. That is very costly, and I am sure the Minister for Environment would be aware of how much of his department's budget is taken up in keeping these species on life support. In a way there is a hidden subsidy given to those who exceed their licensing entitlements when they extract water from the Gngangara mound and we have to keep another part of the system afloat. In fact we are in the ridiculous situation of having to take water from the bottom of the supply—the reservoir—up to the top to tip into the cave system because it is at a much higher level and is critical to these endangered species of flora and fauna. It would be an absolute tragedy and a real slight on our civilisation—I am sure the environment minister would agree with me—if we were to put species at risk. It is not something the Minister for Environment would want on his record if he had to accept that he had been the minister at a time when we lost species. It is certainly something all Western Australians would be ashamed of. No civilisation wants on its record responsibility for the demise of an entire species. The species that live in these groundwater ecosystems have evolved in such a way that they do not have the capacity to move to other areas and only that little bit of habitat is suitable for them. Lose that habitat and that environment and we lose those species. The interconnection therefore between good management of the Gngangara mound and management of Yanchep National Park is inextricably linked. If we do not manage to develop this Gngangara sustainability strategy for Yanchep National Park, we will not have a national park worthy of having a management plan.

I would put this issue to the house in this way: we should complete the management plan with its recommendations and requirements and put it out in the community. It is essential that we take that as the peak of the whole process. The Gngangara sustainability strategy has to be designed in such a way that the management plan will be supported. We cannot allow it to be the other way—that is, a so-called sustainability strategy that in effect gives rise to the demise of the lakes and the groundwater ecosystems in Yanchep caves. If we were to allow that, we would get things the wrong way around. In other words, we are talking about using the natural environment as an indicator of the overall health of the Gngangara mound. That makes perfect sense from the

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p3098b-3115a

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point of view of an analysis of the ecosystem. It makes a lot of sense to ensure that we look after the natural environment. We can then use that as our number one indicator of the health of the overall system. We do of course want to take water from the system into the future, but if we have to do that in a way that jeopardises the health of the Yanchep caves, we will fail the first test on how the Gngangara sustainability strategy should be implemented.

Other members have talked about the need for us to look at measures such as groundwater replenishment. That will need to be done in the future. There are all sorts of potential needs there. There is the potential for us to replenish the mound with 100 gegalitres of water a year once the whole system has been proven up, once it has gained community acceptability and once the community has come around to the idea that the groundwater replenishment scheme means purifying sewerage, which also means allowing it to percolate deep into the aquifers and eventually drawing it out again. That is a sort of gold-plated system when it comes to potential health impacts. It is a very safe and sound system, but it must gain community acceptability, and I think there is strong support for this on both sides of the house. However, we must acknowledge that many people in the community continue to be anxious about the idea of groundwater replenishment schemes. Nevertheless, a groundwater replenishment scheme could be critical to the future of the Gngangara mound.

When we compare that with the risk we face currently of wetlands drying out, the acidification of wetland areas, the release of heavy metals and the demise of different parts of those surface expressions of the whole Gngangara system, we can see that we must take some form of action. But we can take action quicker than proving up this groundwater replenishment scheme. We can take action by making sure that the Water Corporation's extraction rate is within its set limits. We need to make sure as well that the horticulture users that we have talked about are operating within their set limits. I believe that the cutting down of the pine plantation is, of course, a good thing; and that the speeding up of that could allow for the increased replenishment of the mound as well, but we have to accept a few other matters too. These 169 licences across the mound should be subject to some form of metering.

I need to just clarify, as I might have got this wrong, that there are 663 licences on the mound. I was confused with the figure of 169 users who were found to be in breach of their licence. That is an amazing number of people who have a licence and are in breach of the entitlement they have obtained. That is why we need metering: so that we can see by how much these people are exceeding their licence allocation. We have to make sure that they are all properly metered into the future. I know that previously there has been some debate about the level of licence at which we could implement metering. Personally I think it should be at a fairly low level. There is no reason that we should not meter people who are in any form of commercial activity. It is reasonable to know what their water usage rate is. We can then look at their crops and assess the efficiency of their water usage. It may well emerge that their form of sprinkler usage or centre-pivot irrigation system is not used to maximum effect and they can get advice from those in the industry on how to make their system more efficient. However, all that is dependent on having a good, reliable metering system so that we know the usage rates for individual licence holders. I hope that the minister is able to respond to that point, and perhaps even present some detail on how far a good metering system across all 663 water licences would go in helping us to turn around this 700-gigalitre storage deficit in the system.

I have already spoken a little about the interconnectedness of the surface expressions on the Gngangara mound that are below ground in the cave system. I have talked a little about how the decline of the wetlands is demonstrated by the acidification of different surface water bodies and the release of heavy metals into the environment from that acidification process. I know that whenever I hear from those studying this at Edith Cowan University, and I have already mentioned Professor Pierre Horwitz, the studies are alarming. They are an indication of the unsustainability of our use of that area with the land-use practices, the water extraction rates, the degree of urbanisation and the general misuse of the system. Therefore, there is a huge responsibility on the government to use those indicators of an unhealthy environment and of poor practice to turn things around. That is why I say that perhaps the best environmental indicators of the overall sustainability of how we are looking after the Gngangara mound is the health of the caves, and that is why this management plan for the Yanchep and Neerabup parks and reserves needs to be implemented in its final version. Keeping it around in its draft form will not do anyone any good at all. The draft has received much comment and it has engaged people and helped them further focus, but I think that it is fair to say as well that it has probably made people realise that they have been hearing about this for far too many years. They have heard for far too long how the area has been neglected, how it has been abused and how, especially, we have seen over-extraction of water from the Gngangara mound and how damaging it has been to its overall health.

We have also heard that a cost figure has been put on the changes required. The figure of some \$340 million is suggested as a means of turning things around. When we think about what is at stake here, and that the Gngangara mound currently supplies some 60 to 70 per cent of our water supply, to invest \$340 million is not unreasonable. If we bear in mind the cost of desalination plants, \$340 million to establish the health of the Gngangara mound is

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

not unreasonable. I think the steady logging of the 18 000 hectares of pine plantation must continue as well. The health of the Gngangara mound is something important to us all.

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef) [5.13 pm]: I approached this motion thinking that I would more or less agree with the thrust of where the opposition was heading; indeed, it made a lot of points that I agreed with. But I have to say that in listening to the course of the debate, I am absolutely aghast at where it has been taken with accusations of market gardeners of being water thieves. Members opposite need to remember that these are the people growing our food. The member for Gosnells made all sorts of accusations about people on properties on Pinjar Road. I like the fact that he kept asking me whether I had ever been there; I was actually born and raised there, so I have been there once or twice!

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Member, by your definition, if someone takes more than their licence entitlement, is that not a form of theft?

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is a good question, member. Both the member for Gosnells and the member for Cockburn have accused those good people out there in Wanneroo who for generations have been growing our food. It is not grapevines or more luxury items; it is our cabbages, potatoes and our cauliflowers. Yes, if there are issues with their water licences, we can deal with them, but the member for Gosnells made a speech suggesting we should be metering their bores. He implied that we should probably even lower their water licences. He said that they are absolutely wasting water, yet by the same token he has never stood up and made a speech about cutting down the water use of people using domestic bores to water their lawns. Apparently it is fine to grow grass, but not food.

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is exactly what the member just made a big speech about. He particularly targeted that one group, and that group is the smallest percentage of users drawing from the mound. The member for Wanneroo quite interestingly said that the bare necessities of life are food, water and shelter. There are a lot of other things we can deal with in the middle there. There is industry use, and I absolutely agree with the member for Gosnells. There are the pine plantations that the member for Wanneroo touched on. There is also, of course, the government's drawdown, and maybe we need to look at alternative water sources. There is also the recharge. There are a lot of programs in the middle of that, but I am very surprised that the member for Gosnells has chosen the very good market gardeners of the areas of Wanneroo and Butler.

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Gosnells!

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said, that part of the world was home to me. Although I am now privileged to live in the electorate of Ocean Reef, I grew up on a property on Rousett Road that more or less runs parallel with Pinjar Road, which the member referred to. Rousett Road is an extension of Lenore Road, which members opposite might be a bit more familiar with. Where I lived, we were right near a pumping station. I remember as a young child when my family moved out to the farm. We had a water licence on the farm, too, and I might address that a bit later.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Did you exceed your licence?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I would imagine that we were lucky to use 10 per cent. Another thing I will get to is the numbers that the member for Gosnells has thrown around, extrapolating from a volunteer system of metering. I think there are some very highly questionable figures, but we will get back to that later, too.

I grew up a property there and we had a water licence over 10 acres. We used maybe three acres for growing a mandarin orchard—it involved very small water usage. I moved out there in the 1980s, and I can remember one day when I was about seven or eight years old, I think I must have been annoying my father, because he encouraged me to go and dig a hole.

Dr A.D. Buti: This is your life!

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is right; this is my life!

I used to go out into the paddock and it only took me half an hour to dig a hole about so deep—I was still quite young—and I would hit water right in the middle of winter. In fact, all our bores were sunk down on shafts and the bottoms of those shafts would fill up with water every year when I was a child, yet, by the time I moved out of the farm, even our deepest bore dried up. I am not saying by any means that there is not a serious, serious problem there.

Mr P.C. Tinley: What's your solution.

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will get to that, member.

I am just saying that there are a lot of targeted solutions, and as members have all said, there is no one silver bullet; it is a matter of prioritising how we get towards solutions. It was encouraging to hear from the member for Wanneroo; what he said had not occurred to me. Mariginiup Lake, which was the closest lake to our property, used to indeed dry out every summer, and I have noticed that in the last couple of years it has not, even when we have had particularly dry years. It is good to see some of those lakes coming back to some degree. As the member for Wanneroo also said, I think the pine plantation is a very large culprit. I would be interested, if the member for Gosnells wants to interject, on an estimate of what the pine plantation draws from the Gngangara mound on an annual basis.

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: No. I would be very interested to learn that figure; I think it would be an awful lot. That pine plantation is really on banksia scrubland, which is just a proteaceae-type tree. Even though there were trees there before, they conserved water and they would let all the water percolate quite readily down into the aquifer and recharge it. Therefore, it is not just the fact that the pine trees themselves draw an extraordinary amount of water from the mound every year; it is also the fact that they are stopping a heck of a lot of water getting back in as well. That is a very big double problem. I think the member for Gosnells might even agree with me about chopping down trees in this particular case. The sooner we can chop those trees down and replace them with suitable banksias, the better for everyone.

Mr J.M. Francis interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Actually, the cockatoos absolutely love the pine trees.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: It is not that good for them, though!

Mr A.P. JACOB: It might not be, but they love them. I do not think they will be happy to lose them!

One of the most exciting remedies is the one I want to speak about. A lot of potential solutions have been talked about. I guess ultimate water sources are a big issue for Perth. We are a growing city. We have very large water needs in this city, and these will have to be addressed. We cannot continue with this reliance on the mound indefinitely, because it will eventually dry out. One of the more exciting projects is the waste water treatment plant at Beenyup. We are looking at increasing the recharge program. I think at the moment, minister, it is running at about 1.5 gegalitres a year as a trial; is that correct?

Mr W.R. Marmion: Yes.

Mr A.P. JACOB: There was a good article in *The Weekend West* on Saturday saying that that trial will be ramped up. I think we will be ramping it up towards maybe 7.5 gegalitres in the next phase, and that will be carrying on over, hopefully, even up to a grand total of 35 gegalitres a year, which is the capacity of that trial.

I prepared for today and gave it some thought and now that I live near the Joondalup side but still in the local area, I think the most recognisable icon of the Gngangara mound in our region would have to be Lake Joondalup. The member for Wanneroo and I share a dual-use path there. Lake Joondalup in Yellagonga Regional is one of the biggest tourist attractions in our region. For many years Lake Joondalup has dried up each summer. I have also heard from the older market gardeners, as has the member for Wanneroo. They have told me that they remember that many decades ago Lake Joondalup used to dry up every summer. I was told the theory that the quarry compaction collapsed some underground caves. That is only a theory, but a theory from people who have lived in the area their entire lives, so perhaps we should give it some credence.

I did some quick calculations to try to quantify what this recharge program means for the Gngangara mound. If we were to fill Lake Joondalup so that it was one-metre deep across the entire lake, which I think would be its maximum—in fact, the lake would reach overflow status—it would contain 3.2 gegalitres. The next stage of the recharge program will involve the equivalent of more than two Lake Joondalups worth of water going back into that aquifer every year. Indeed, if we are able to get that recharge program all the way out to 35 gegalitres, that is about the equivalent of 12 full-volume Lake Joondalups going back into the aquifer. This is not only about the water program and getting drinking water for Perth. As the member for Gosnells has said, this has some huge environmental implications. Obviously, the caves at Yanchep are a big issue for the member for Mindarie and all of us in the region. The string of wetlands runs the entire way through the area over the mound. Those waterways have suffered increasingly over recent years because of all this.

The member for Gosnells touched on a couple of things around the waste water treatment recharge project. I do not know whether the minister will speak more on this, but it is very good that we have approached this in a cautious manner. We have to bring the community with us. As the local member and as someone who lived for many years right across the road from the water treatment facility and has the current outfall pipe running right

through the middle of my electorate, I am yet to have a single person knock on my door and raise concerns about this issue. I think we might be jumping at shadows. For the most part, the community is here with us. The recharge project will take about 50 years to percolate its way to where the drinking water supply is drawn. I think most people would be comfortable if it were to take 10 or 20 years, but 50 years is really drawing it out. As I said, growing up on the mound I have seen the quality of water that is pulled out of the mound. I shared with the minister the concern in the back of my mind that if we purify it too much before we put it down, we might be changing the balance down there. It is not the nicest water when it first comes up and it already goes through quite a process to become our drinking water. Some of it almost looks like the primary waste water that gets pumped through the area. A lot of residents probably would not like it if they saw how it looks before the Water Corporation deals with and puts it in the pipes to their households.

The member for Gosnells might be interested in the surveys that have been done recently. The Water Corporation has tracked community attitudes on the waste water treatment program since 2007. Two surveys were conducted last year, one in July and another in November. The surveys consistently found about 70 per cent support for a recharge program. I am not sure what questions were put to the participants, but when we think of recharge programs or recycled waste water programs around the world, this one has the least yuck factor. Most people answering the survey who opposed the idea were probably thinking of a process that got it back into the system much more quickly. Only 21 per cent, less than one-fifth, of the population was opposed. I understand that it has a yuck factor, but for the most part the community is seized with this project. I do not know whether the community gets quite as excited about it as we tend to, but it can see the necessity for a waste water treatment program and what a good job it will do.

Before I return to the discussion about market gardeners and those who grow our food, it is probably appropriate for me to tackle larger users—the councils. The member for Armadale interjected across the chamber to ask what our local councils have done. When I was on the Joondalup city council, we signed up to the ICLEI program. As a council we made a decision to target our water use. ICLEI program stands for International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. The program gave us a range of operational goals, which we have moved through quite quickly. I am very keen to see a park in Currambine in my electorate get up. We are now well under our average water usage, whereas I suspect Joondalup was quite over previously.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Does that include groundwater recharging as well?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I do not know because it is not the council's project. I am not sure whether it can count the groundwater recharge, even though it is happening within its council area. An awful lot of exciting things are happening in the water area. The politics of these issues also comes into it. I do not know whether the minister was going to speak to this. Looking at the draw, until we get these other programs up and running and until we —

Mr W.R. Marmion: What are you going to ask me?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I was going to speak to this graph.

Mr P.C. Tinley: It is not laminated. It cannot be used in this chamber unless it is laminated.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I know, but I am a mere backbencher. It is not even in colour. Clearly, members of the Legislative Assembly are not as well-resourced as ministers! This graph has been printed on the Legislative Assembly printer, which is why it is only A4 and black and white and why nobody can read it. I wanted to get in on the chart fad. I was feeling left out.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: That is an L-plate chart.

Mr F.A. Alban: You're showing potential.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you. This graph quite clearly tracks the drawing down of the Gnangara mound. We can see the draw over the years. The camera will not be able to pick it up, but we can see the general trend of the graph. This starts at 1985, which was the year I first moved out to the mound.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Is that all users or just Water Corp?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I think this is the Water Corporation. I will have to get back to the member on that.

Mr W.R. Marmion: What is the highest one on the scale?

Mr A.P. JACOB: The highest one on the scale is 2006–07, which I thought was an interesting point.

Mr W.R. Marmion: Does it say how many gigalitres?

Mr A.P. JACOB: It does. It reads "160 gigalitres".

Mr W.R. Marmion: It's Water Corp.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, I thought it was showing the drawdown by Water Corp.

Mr P.C. Tinley: So, it can't be trusted?

Mr A.P. JACOB: That figure is during the Labor Party's term of government.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: So you've got to add our horticultural friends.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, I do realise that, but as I said, for our horticultural friends water is an absolute necessity because they produce our food.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: What about the drinking water supply for the human population?

Mr A.P. JACOB: As the member for Wanneroo said, they are not drawing it from the drinking water levels and they have to irrigate their crops to grow our food.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: It is all interconnected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: People cannot grow crops the same way they grow their lawn. People cannot grow crops on a two-day reticulation cycle. We cannot make our farmers water their gardens only between 6.00 pm and 6.00 am two days a week.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Most of that food produce is exported and most of those producers could be far more efficient in their water use. There're a few issues for us to deal with.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The ones the member for Gosnells is targeting are the ones who generally would be growing for the domestic market and boutique items such as mandarins, as we did. There are not so many vineyards in the area anymore, but those sorts of farmers would not be drawing anywhere near the amount of water that is drawn by those market gardeners who, for the most part, grow our food. Anyway, we will not keep going down that road.

I bring to the house's attention that water is a necessity. We are over-reliant on the Gngangara mound. I agree with members opposite on that and I am not trying to detract from that. We can all recognise that something needs to be done. We can see that under the Labor government the drawdown on the Gngangara mound was a lot greater than it has been under ours. This is a good opportunity to put that on the record and set the record straight.

I have a few more minutes. The minister absolutely has to be recognised. When he first became the Minister for Water, I chatted with him in the members' dining room about the Beenyup waste water treatment program. The minister has been well seized of this one right from the outset.

That is pumping gigalitres, five kilometres I think it is, out into an ocean outfall. It is an absolute waste of a resource. There is a fantastic opportunity there. It is one of the best things we can do through Water Corporation at the moment. Our government has seized on the work done previously and run with it. A lot of good work is being done. The subtext to all of this is that by and large there is a lot of agreement in the way that we are going forward.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Minister for Water) [5.30 pm]: I think I will address the motion first about Yanchep National Park, and then I will probably move on to the broader question about the Gngangara mound. I note the member for Mindarie's concerns with regard to Yanchep National Park. I can provide my assurance to him that the state government is not neglecting this iconic national park area. In fact the existing management plan for the Yanchep National Park remains current until it is replaced by the draft one, and then the draft one becomes the actual plan. There is a plan in existence. The new draft plan has been developed by the Department of Environment and Conservation on behalf of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia.

As members know, the new management plan covers the Yanchep and Neerabup national parks, proposed additions to these parks and the Neerabup nature reserve. The draft plan was released for public comment in 2010 and has since been revised and updated to take into account public submissions that we have received. In recognition of Yanchep National Park's diverse environmental values, the state government currently spends \$2 million annually on the management and maintenance of the park. They employ 13 full-time equivalent staff. Also of interest is that all revenue from the gate entry fees is reinvested in the park and contributes to its annual budget. Between 2008 in 2010 more than \$1 million has been invested in the upgrade of the underground electrical services in the park.

Over the past 18 months, the Department of Environment and Conservation has also developed and implemented an extensive weed mapping and control program which includes a significant level of involvement by volunteers. In 2010–11 the actual volunteer time dedicated to weed control around Loch McNess, which is at the heart of the park, exceeded 1 900 hours. I would like to recognise those volunteers. Volunteers right across Western Australia do a wonderful job in conservation.

In this financial year the government has spent an additional \$150 000 on the refurbishment of park facilities and infrastructure for visitors to enjoy. The wealth of activities available in conjunction with the state government's Rediscover Parks initiative has seen a 30 per cent increase in visitor numbers since 2008, with more than 275 000 people from Western Australia, interstate and overseas now visiting the park each year.

It is therefore quite relevant that Yanchep National Park was listed as a finalist in the 2011 Western Australian tourism awards under the category of tourist attraction. As the member for Mindarie has rightly pointed out, Loch McNess has for many years been a major tourist attraction in itself. I can draw on my experience as a young boy visiting Yanchep National Park. I remember going down the caves. I was probably below the age of 12, but I still remember going down that cave and seeing this enormous tap root going down to the bottom. I remember that the ranger who was guiding the group mentioned that there was a problem with this tree. They were worried about the tree because it was chasing the water as it went down. That is probably about —

Mr P.C. Tinley: Fifty.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Unfortunately, it is a little under 50 years ago.

Mr P.C. Tinley: Just helping.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Thanks very much.

Another thing I recall about Yanchep National Park was its importance as a tourist attraction and a showcase for Western Australia. When I worked at Main Roads, the Commissioner of Main Roads, Don Aitken, who was commissioner for 22 years—an outstanding commissioner and engineer—would have his functions at Yanchep National Park when he had international visitors. He saw that as a showcase for Western Australia. I know that for previous generations of those of us in this room, Yanchep National Park was one of the places people would go. I spoke to my mother today, and she said it was a very formal occasion. Morning and afternoon teas were served at Yanchep National Park, and it was a highly regarded place to go.

In getting back to the environmental side, environmental management reports on the water levels submitted to the Environmental Protection Authority have noted that Loch McNess has been noncompliant with minimum water levels since 2002. As the member for Mindarie noted, there was a marked decline in water levels in the summer of 2007. There is not one reason for this situation; rather, there is a series of interwoven factors that I think many members have alluded to. First, we all know that the climate is our state's south west is drying, and this is likely to continue. In fact, the result of years of reduced rainfall is visible across many of the wetlands of the Swan coastal plain, including those in Yanchep National Park. Also, compared with the long-term average, the water flow into our dams has dropped by 60 per cent over the last 10 years.

The marked decline in the loch's water levels triggered the Department of Water and the Department of Environment and Conservation to take action to improve the understanding of how the loch system works. A two-year investigation involving a drilling program and modelling of the system shows that the hydrological gradient on the downstream side of the lake, which is embedded in porous limestone, has increased. This means that since 2007 water moved more quickly through the lake, and the reduced inflows were no longer enough to sustain the water levels. With this improved hydrogeological understanding, the Department of Water has been able to more accurately assess the causes of water level decline. Along with the regional scale effects of the drying climate and the local effects of mature vegetation, the evidence suggests that local pumping by Department of Environment and Conservation to maintain a threatened ecological community in the cave system and the supplementation program in the vicinity of Yanchep National Park has been affecting the lake's water levels.

Following the recent investigation of bore use in Yanchep National Park, the Department of Environment and Conservation has significantly reduced pumping from bores adjoining Loch McNess. The Department of Water advises that reduced local pumping, along with the recent removal of nearby pine plantations, may lead to some recovery of Loch McNess if there is a wet winter this year. However, with the likelihood of more dry winters like we saw in 2010, this may not happen.

I appreciate the member's suggestion that Loch McNess could be supplemented like Lake Nowergup is. Unfortunately, from the advice I have received, this would not be an effective solution. Both lakes are set in limestone, and once regional water levels are lower than the lake, as has been shown at Lake Nowergup, supplemented water quickly drains away. As well as local pumping, lower groundwater levels across Gngangara groundwater system also contribute, obviously, as many members have said, to the impacts at Loch McNess and elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, this is a result of complex interaction between climate, land use and regional abstraction. Since 2009 the Department of Water has addressed this situation by reducing abstraction in a staged way in promoting greater water-use efficiency, alternative water sources and better urban design.

All members will have noted the declining rainfall which now provides far less recharge to groundwater than it did decades ago. The Department of Water is currently finalising a report that will improve our understanding of the hydrogeology using this site-specific data. Each site is different, and the outcomes of this investigation will aid in the development of management strategies that will be considered as part of the Department of Water's planned review of the Gnamptara groundwater area's allocation plan this year. On a broader scale, the government is already taking steps to protect the Gnamptara groundwater system, a complex system of aquifers that is the largest single source of water for the greater Perth region while also supporting significant wetlands and groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

We know that our climate is changing, but the drying trend has become more noticeable in the past 10 years and is set to continue. Reduced rainfall means we can no longer rely on water from our dams and has increased our reliance on groundwater. But we are facing these challenges by taking a range of actions to ensure a long-term, reliable water supply for our state's development and our lifestyle.

About half of the water from the Gnamptara system is used for public water supply—that means water for both you and me. Let us assume that is the Water Corporation's water.

Our greatest investment to date has been in developing a climate-independent source of water with the expansion of the southern seawater desalination plant at Binningup. The Binningup desalination plant, together with the Kwinana desalination plant, will contribute 150 billion litres a year. That will meet about half of Perth's water needs and provide water security for the people of Perth and Mandurah and towns right through to Kalgoorlie. This will allow us to ease the pressure on the Gnamptara system by reducing the draw to a targeted lower total volume of 110 gegalitres a year from existing infrastructure—which is the figure that the member for Cockburn mentioned from the draft Gnamptara sustainability strategy. The current advice, which is always being updated, is that the sustainable draw on the Gnamptara mound is 110 gegalitres a year. So, when we bring the second stage of the desalination plant on line at the end of this year, we will be in a position to reduce the take on the Gnamptara mound. That is one strategy.

Mr J.R. Quigley: By how much?

Mr W.R. MARMION: It depends on how much rainfall we get. I am not going to mention it here.

Mr J.R. Quigley: But the desal plant is not dependent on rainfall, so you should be able to predict that.

Mr W.R. MARMION: No, but our water security will come from three areas, which is pretty obvious—the dams, which will be through rainfall; the Gnamptara mound; and desalination. It will be a combination of those three. So it will vary from year to year as to what we use. We therefore have a nice little control mechanism to work out how much to take. Obviously if we have a very high rainfall winter, we will be able to draw less from the Gnamptara mound. That is one of the strategies that we have implemented, and that is a very important one. It is a win-win for the public and for the environment.

Other members have talked about the groundwater replenishment trial at Craigie. That is something that I think both sides of the house support. That trial has been going for a year and a half now, and the results from the Department of Health show that it is very successful. It is quite complex. When we implement this—that will be subject to a bit more public consultation, and I am confident that we will get public support for this—treated waste water will be injected into the Leederville aquifer. We will then be able to stop abstracting water from the superficial aquifers—I know the member for Gosnells is very interested in this—which will help the wetlands and the environmentally sensitive areas of Perth, and certainly the low-lying areas, and we will then be able to abstract from the deep aquifers. So we will be abstracting from the Yarragadee a lot more deeply, and obviously that costs a bit more, because the bores will need to be deeper. But the plan that we have at the moment is that over the next 10 years, combined with the recharging of the aquifer through the water replenishment trial, and by putting the deeper bores down to the Yarragadee, we should be able to eliminate abstraction from the superficial aquifers. I am talking about the Water Corporation, of course. This will be a great outcome for the environment of Western Australia. But let us not forget that the water drawdown from the Gnamptara groundwater system is also used for horticulture, agriculture, other businesses, and parks and recreation.

With the 2009 Gnamptara groundwater allocation plan, private use has been capped in areas in which licence entitlements exceed recharge. The Department of Water is already looking at the model—it is not just a simple model—and in areas in which entitlements exceed the recharge, private use has been capped. Most local governments have now developed water conservation and water efficiency plans so that they can better manage water for their parks and public open space. I know that there is still pressure on water for public open space in the northern suburbs as development progresses. But there is now a greater compliance focus following the strategic restructure of the Department of Water. Therefore, in terms of water use, I am confident that we can

Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

keep a handle on that. Indeed, on that point, member for Gosnells, the larger users are metered. But it is the case, as the member said, of determining at which level they should be metered. The member suggested that commercial users should be metered, and that is something we can look at. The big users are metered, and they need to have water management plans and efficiency plans approved by the Department of Water.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: What is the limit now? Is it 100 000?

Mr W.R. MARMION: From memory I think it is 500 000 kilolitres, but I can check that. I was actually going to focus today on Yanchep National Park, so I do not have with me all the figures around the Gnangara mound. There are over-users, as some members alluded to, and they are being investigated by the department's compliance and enforcement unit, and they will be subjected to a range of appropriate enforcement actions if we can get the evidence. They are also being targeted as part of an extensive compliance monitoring program involving regular meter reading and random compliance audits. In conjunction with this, we are continuing to promote a range of initiatives to encourage water conservation and the need to protect groundwater, as the member would know, such as the winter sprinkler ban, the Target 60 scheme over summer, Waterwise Schools, the showerhead swap program, and the H₂ome Smart program, to name a few.

We all know that the south west of Western Australia is one of the few places on the planet in which there is no dispute about the evidence of a drying climate. We have all seen the graphs and the charts, and it is disturbing. I think I saw the first chart when Jim Gill was the chief executive officer of the Water Corporation, and every time he gave a presentation, no matter what the subject was, he would pull out a graph and would show that for the last 10 years the mean rainfall had dropped. That was probably about 10 or 15 years ago, and the latest graph shows that rainfall has dropped even further. So it is disturbing, members.

But the Liberal–National government is committed to better managing, planning and delivering sustainable long-term water supplies to ensure the continuing economic and social development of Western Australia. However, to have water for people, for parks and for Loch McNess, we must continue to explore ways of becoming smarter with what water we have available.

I thank all members for their interest in this important matter, as this government continues to take action to adapt to the challenges presented by our drying climate and the demands of a growing city.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Mindarie) [5.47 pm] — in reply: I will reply briefly. I would like to say this. The minister referred to the “Parks and Reserves of Yanchep and Neerabup: Draft Management Plan 2010”. He said that the government has been in receipt of public submissions and is going to prepare a final plan. However, that plan has never been finalised, as I said in my original speech, and cannot be finalised, because the 2009 Gnangara mound sustainability plan has never been finalised and remains not finalised. The minister in his response has given a few indicators of where the government might go with that plan, but it has never been finalised. Because the Gnangara mound sustainability plan has not been finalised, of course the Yanchep–Neerabup park management plan can never be finalised. We are now in 2012, and this government has been in office for almost four years.

These two draft plans have come up during this government's term of office and the government will go into the election without ever having finalised them. Neither the government, the departments, nor, more importantly, the community, has a clear direction about how to ever turn around the environmental tragedy that is occurring in my electorate, which is most evident in Yanchep National Park. There have been some good contributions from members to this debate today. However, I thought that the poorest contribution was from the member for Wanneroo, who attacked the local media—the Yanchep *Sun City News* and its editor, Mr Terry Loftus—for raising this issue. I know that Mr Terry Loftus can be a challenging editor for some local members because he questions and probes and does not publish pap. In the case of the Yanchep National Park, I can recall the way he challenged me in an almost aggressive manner about when I had last mentioned in Parliament Yanchep National Park and the environmental tragedy that is occurring there. I pointed out to him that I had mentioned it on four occasions, the most recent of which was in April this year during my response to the Premier's Statement and that I have been continually raising this problem. I congratulate *Sun City News* for once again highlighting the problem and reject outright the member for Wanneroo's criticism of it as being just a rag. In fact, by giving prominence to this issue, *Sun City News* has generated nearly three hours of debate in this chamber on the environmental problem that we face in Yanchep. Not only that, by highlighting the issue in the manner that he did, and has continued to do, Terry Loftus has also attracted the attention of the national newspaper, *The Australian*. On 9 May, following a *Sun City News* article that highlighted the problem, Paige Taylor published an article in *The Australian* with—I will hold up the photograph—a picture of someone other than me standing in the mud. In the photo is Mrs Barbara Yates Rothwell, an octogenarian from Yanchep who has lived there since 1980. She is photographed standing by the mudflat that is now Loch McNess. She supplied the photograph of the pelicans swimming on the lake for the paper and laments that the lake is drying. Interestingly, in response to the member for Ocean Reef, who has childhood recollections of digging there and finding water, the article notes

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 23 May 2012]

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Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Paul Miles; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Albert Jacob; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr John Quigley; Speaker

from the Water Corporation's figures that in April this year the water level was four metres below the surface and as recently as 1997 it was only two metres below the surface. Any member who drove to Yanchep National Park would quickly turn around their government vehicle and get back to the chamber to vote in support of the motion that I have moved, which is critical of the government for failing to resolve and finalise the report into Yanchep and Neerabup National Parks. I commend the motion to the chamber.

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (20)

Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr A.J. Waddell
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr P.B. Watson
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr M.P. Murray	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Mr C.J. Tallentire	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr P. Papalia	Mr P.C. Tinley	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (25)

Mr P. Abetz	Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr A. Krsticevic	Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr F.A. Alban	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr J.E. McGrath	Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr A.J. Simpson (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr I.M. Britza	Dr K.D. Hames	Ms A.R. Mitchell	
Mr T.R. Buswell	Mr A.P. Jacob	Dr M.D. Nahan	
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr D.T. Redman	

Pairs

Mrs C.A. Martin	Mr C.C. Porter
Mr T.G. Stephens	Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr E.S. Ripper	Dr E. Constable
Ms R. Saffioti	Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr V.A. Catania

Question thus negatived.

The SPEAKER: If members wish to remain in here, it is always a great joy to me. However, if members do not have business in this place, I suggest they leave, which I am hoping to do myself in about two minutes. I will give members that opportunity to leave now, unless they want to wait with me until 6.00 pm. I remind those members who remain—some need it—that we will not have grievances tomorrow morning; they will be taken tomorrow afternoon, member for Southern River, just in case you are involved in that procedure. We are having grievances immediately after question time when we will be greatly hopeful, member for Mandurah, that the majority of ministers will be in this place so that grievances can be taken. I provide that information to members. Although it may seem to some members most peculiar that I am again on my feet, there is a very good reason for it. We are having a dinner break tonight at 6.00 pm and I will be leaving this chair at six o'clock. I will not resume the chair, but an Acting Speaker will take my place at seven o'clock so that further responses to the Treasurer's budget speech can be undertaken.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm