

BUSSELTON WATER BOARD (SUPPLY OF WATER TO DUNSBOROUGH) BILL 2009

Second Reading

Resumed from 17 June.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [4.16 pm]: I rise to speak in the second reading debate on this Busselton Water Board (Supply of Water to Dunsborough) Bill 2009. I indicate to you, Mr Acting Speaker, to the house and to the government that the opposition will be supporting this bill. It is a very simple and straightforward bill that needs support. However, there will be a number of speakers on this bill because it raises a number of issues. In effect, this bill is a very straightforward, simple bill with five clauses. It deals with the need for the Water Corporation to come to agreement with the Busselton Water Board for the supply of water. I am talking about the significant amount of water that exists in and around Busselton that is controlled by the Busselton Water Board for the Water Corporation, particularly water from the area that is designated as the cape-to-cape area. Because of the massive growth in the number of houses and subdivisions in that area over the past 20 years, the significant increase in demand for water in that cape-to-cape region cannot be met from the supply in that region. Effectively, therefore, the Water Corporation wants to go to the Busselton Water Board, which is a separate legal entity, and seek a water trade deal between the Busselton Water Board and the Water Corporation. However, currently that cannot take place because under the legislation the Busselton Water Board has no power to enter into a supply agreement with any organisation, even the Water Corporation. Therefore, effectively, this bill gives the Busselton Water Board the power to enter into a contract with the Water Corporation for the supply of water. In its essence it is a simple bill and one that the opposition will support because of the need for that water for further development in the cape-to-cape region. However, there are a number of issues that I would like to raise with and seek the response of the Minister for Water during the second reading debate. Some issues I want to raise with the minister are, for example, the capital works cost for the application of the water trade deal itself. We are dealing here with legislation that will allow the Busselton Water Board to enter into a contract for the supply of water. Once that is done, and the contract has been entered into and signed off, there is the practical aspect of the supply of water from the Busselton region to the cape-to-cape area. Some technical investment will have to be made, particularly in headworks engineering, that may require capital expenditure. I ask the minister what capital works cost will result from this water trade deal. Have such costs being included in this year's budget or, as is the case with infill sewerage, will the government have to go back and seek extra money from the Treasurer to put this water trade deal into practice? As the minister well and truly knows, \$580 million has been slashed from the capital works budget for the Water Corporation as a result of this year's budget cuts—that is nearly one-third of the entire capital works budget for the Water Corporation. Here, the minister is bringing into the house an ostensibly good bill to allow the supply of water to the cape-to-cape area, which will probably lead to a need for investment in capital works to make the whole thing work. I would like to know, and I am sure the residents of the cape-to-cape area would like to know, whether the minister has any money to do this. It is all right walking in here with the bill, but is there any money to carry out its objects, given the fact that the minister has rolled over and allowed the Treasurer to cut one-third of his capital works budget from underneath him?

The other issue I would like the minister to answer in his reply to the second reading debate is: why is this bill being introduced in this format in the first place? As I raised with the minister during question time—a question he failed to answer—had he brought the enabling legislation for Western Australia's commitments under the National Water Initiative into this house and had them passed, we would not be having this debate today.

Mr C.J. Barnett: There has been a change of government.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: This is not about a change of government.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, it is.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No it is not; it is about a lazy minister. This bill is being brought into this house because the minister has not got off his backside after more than a year in the job and introduced the enabling legislation to allow water trading to take place. What are we dealing with here? A water trade between the Busselton Water Board and the Water Corporation. This bill has been introduced into this house because the minister has failed to introduce in a timely fashion enabling legislation to allow water trading to take place. This is just the tip of the iceberg of the problems that will emerge out of the delay in bringing that enabling legislation before the house. A groundswell of issues is arising, particularly in regional Western Australia, as a result of that enabling legislation not being in place. The Department of Water is scaring rural landholders and producers by raising the prospect of the licensing of dams, and referring to the Economic Regulation Authority the question of how much they will be paying for the use of those dams without there being any legal framework to apply it. People in the Manjimup-Pemberton region, who are really angry about this, were given a commitment by the minister that he

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would not refer the matter to the ERA, and that he would further consult with them before the issue of the licensing of dams and the fees that they will have to pay as part of their input costs was decided. He has not done so, and they are very angry with him.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: We're doing it. I met with them earlier this year.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The minister did meet with them earlier this year; back in April. He gave that commitment then, but he still referred it to the ERA, and that is what people are angry about—the minister did not go back and have that discussion with them. That is another aspect of water trading—the issue we are dealing with here and now—that could and should have been overcome by the enactment of the water resources management bill and the water services bill prior to the minister's department raising the prospect of a new tax to be applied to rural landholders and producers through the licensing of in-stream and spring dams. They fear that this is the thin end of the wedge. Will it be first the licensing of in-stream and spring dams, and then later will licensing be extended to run-off dams? Will they have to pay for having dams that they constructed themselves on their own land to gather water? Until now, landholders have had a right to do that, but will they now have to pay for the very fact that they have dams that they paid for themselves on their own land? Will that regime then be expanded to include run-off dams that occasionally get filled by heavy rainfall? Will they be licensed? Will the landholders have to pay for those? Ultimately, will a volumetric charge be applied to those landholders and producers for the water they hold in the dams that they build? That is the major concern in regional Western Australia, even in this area. Last month, the minister announced the creation of a new water plan for the Whicher region, covering Bunbury, Busselton and down to the capes. Many rural producers in the area are concerned with the way the minister is going. That is the rest of the iceberg that I referred to. The tip of it is the bill we are dealing with at the moment.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with the government's proposal for water trading. The point is that we are discussing this bill because the minister has not pushed the Department of Water to complete the drafting of the water trading legislation. A lot of work was done under the previous government. I admit that the legislation was not in a form that would have allowed it to be brought before Parliament, but a significant amount of work had already been done on the legislation, particularly the water services bill, as the minister knows. That water services bill could quite easily have covered the work of the bill we are debating today. In fact, had the work on the water services bill been concluded, taken to cabinet and brought into this house, even if it had been brought in tomorrow, we would be talking about the repeal of this bill. It would completely wipe out the need for this bill. I seek from this minister answers to some questions that I have, not so much about the detail of the bill—the bill is so simple with five clauses that it speaks for itself—but about the effect of this bill in reality, and the cost in capital works for the implementation of this bill that would lead to water trading. Is money in the budget? Is water trade a reality? Why do we have this bill in the first place when the minister could have brought in the water services bill, which I know the minister is committed to and that in fact his government is obliged to do as part of the whole National Water Initiative? The government is committed to creating the water services bill and the water resources management bill as part of the national agreement. As I put to the minister at question time, and I ask again, when are those bills to come before the house? Why could at least one of those bills not have come before the house? That bill could have repealed a whole series of outdated pieces of legislation, including the Water Boards Act 1904. It would allow this water trade to take place under a modernised piece of legislation, which would resolve a whole series of other issues, including the water trade deal. Those are the issues I wish to raise as part of this debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members, when you go outside—I hope that members outside and in the foyer to my right can hear me—please keep your voices down because the sound carries. Hansard is here trying to record the debate of the Parliament. If members leave to my right, could they continue walking, because the sound is upsetting the staff.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Preston) [4.32 pm]: I rise to speak briefly on the Busselton Water Board (Supply of Water to Dunsborough) Bill 2009 and the changes that are being mooted. In the first instance, I certainly support what is being proposed. However, looking at how the board has been run for many years, the lack of down time and the infrastructure that has been put in place, I have some slight concern that the extra pressure involved may shrink the available money, which would result in a substandard service for the people of Busselton. They are the long-term consumers who have supported the board. From time to time we see the focus go off providing a service for the community and onto a trade issue and a question of how many dollars can be made. In many areas over the years, the focus has been on ending up with a surplus, which means that the utility could move further forward or further away from its core service, which is to supply water to Busselton and the surrounding region. That is my first concern. I would like to think it is being addressed. I am sure the minister is listening.

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Water trading is certainly in line with the National Water Initiative and something we must do. Although some may have different views from mine about it, the integrated electricity system has worked quite well over the years. I believe that the system with water should be exactly the same. The more we spread it and the more we integrate it, the more we make the region drought proof.

I have concern about the board being taken over in the future and the community content of the board being taken away. In a similar way to people in Bunbury, the people of Busselton have a huge feeling of ownership with such utilities. People spend a great deal of time attending meetings and listening to the community, which happens with community groups. It is great to see it. The board is a perfect example of it and has done well over the years.

I also have concern that if the government does not give some seed funding in the first instance, the water board might not be able to go forward with the necessary infrastructure. It would be unfair if the board had to borrow money on the open market to do it and then have to charge its loyal customers for many years so that it could pay for it. I am concerned about the consumer who has been there for many years and the local households that could get caught up in this round-robin system and then have to pay more to service debt into the future. I am sure that local groups would be very upset if that were the case. I do not know the exact amount of the cost of the infrastructure, but there is the cost to hook in, the cost to pipe and the cost to pump. It is not a cheap exercise. The other part of the question is: if the government is funding major infrastructure with the return coming from water trading, will the existing infrastructure drop away and maybe maintenance drop away? I would rather see something built in that would ensure that maintenance is kept up to standard, which is very important. It would certainly give some comfort to people who live in the area.

As for the changes to the board system, because of the way it has worked, it may need someone from outside to be maybe an observer or a board member, but I beg the minister not to take away the rights of the current board members, and strip them and gut them so that they become only head noddors and rubber stamp decisions. The local content must be the first cab off the rank.

Another point relates to the Water Corporation—the costs and the returns. We have seen what happened with Harvey Water, which has worked quite well. There was a hiccup, however, and the Department of Sport and Recreation had to return \$10 million because of a government change in direction about the Logue Brook Dam.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Do you support the government's decision to allow the recreational use of Logue Brook?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I have always supported that position. There should be multi-use of all the dams. I was really glad to see recently that a committee has been formed to look at that question. Many people have seen me about it. On the east coast people are allowed to use dams for houseboats, fishing and many other uses. The Water Corporation believes it can provide safer drinking water for people. There are not many places in the world that have water as safe as ours. We can go into any bathroom, turn on a tap and have a drink if we wish. We can do that because barriers have been kept in place. If that is the case, there must be a compromise. We would not like to see at Busselton something like the \$10 million that was taken back from the Department of Sport and Recreation.

Another of my concerns is where the water will come from if the rate of water usage goes up. Will it be from the Yarragadee aquifer or another source, and have environmental studies been done? It is not a matter of just turning a tap on and pumping away. There was a huge public protest some time back about tapping into the Yarragadee aquifer. On the environmental side, I think we have to be very wary that we do not just go forward and start pumping willy-nilly and all of a sudden find that we have the same problem that we had with the Gnangara mound. The south west is a huge area and we must maintain the supply, working closely with people from the Department of Environment and Conservation to ensure that we do not overpump and cause the same problems that have occurred north of Perth. The expansion will come. The expansion in the south west is unprecedented and it is not stopping. The south west is still one of the largest growth areas in Australia. I have not heard from the minister yet and I would really like some assurances that we do not just go out there and put down bores for the sake of making money for Busselton Water, because we will sell it off to them.

Mr T.R. Buswell: People are drinking the water. People will be drinking the water they pump out of the ground.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: That is right, but if we overpump it, we will have another problem —

Dr G.G. Jacobs: They pump more out than they need.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Has the member not heard of a desal plant? I just wonder where the member is coming from. If we want a drink, we will get one from up here, if it is integrated right the way through. That is what I am saying. We should be integrating our system from the bottom to the top, just as the power system is integrated. It is not hard to work out that if we had a surplus of water coming out of Binningup, it could be put into the

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integrated system so that pressure would not be put on the system from Gngangara all the way to Busselton, the Treasurer's area. Perhaps he wants to sell off that area—I am not sure what he is on about. To me, there are certainly a few unanswered questions, some about funding and some about environmental issues, and I think we need to deal with them. In saying that, on face value I do not think there is a major problem, and if some of those questions could be answered, the legislation would be well supported.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Balcatta) [4.41 pm]: I rise to speak in support of the bill, which seeks to implement something that has been talked about and planned for many years. As other members have said, the rate of growth in the Dunsborough and cape-to-cape region is huge. Clearly, government must be able to provide the basic facilities that are required, such as infrastructure, power and water. This legislation deals with the provision of water to people in that area, which is growing very rapidly. The geological structure in the area involves major fault lines along the Darling Scarp and another that runs just outside of Bunbury, through Busselton and down near the cape-to-cape region. They caused a discontinuity in the geology. The really good groundwater in Bunbury and Busselton is not available in Dunsborough and in the cape-to-cape region. In fact, about four years ago, when I was the minister for water, I visited the cape-to-cape region when new drilling was started there to see whether new underground water sources could be proved up in that region. It was always acknowledged it would not be as large and as easily accessible as the water in both Bunbury and Busselton, which is good quality water, easily obtained and, therefore, available at quite a low price, unlike in Dunsborough. The question then arose: how could we provide that water into the Dunsborough region? We are caught by the legislation, which some members have already spoken about, particularly the Water Boards Act 1904. That is how outdated our legislation is. That 1904 act creates problems with Busselton providing water outside its water area. Both Bunbury and Busselton Water Boards have designated areas and they each deliver water into their own area. However, problems arise when it comes to selling that water to another provider or trading it outside the area. This bill will enable the Busselton Water Board to do a deal with the Water Corporation to provide water into the Dunsborough area, because the Dunsborough and cape-to-cape areas are allocated to the Water Corporation of Western Australia. The Water Corporation is the licensed provider to deliver into that area the potable water required. The Busselton Water Board clearly can deliver to Busselton and part of the hinterland, and is licensed for that, but not to go beyond that.

We have in the Busselton Water Board, as we have here in Bunbury, an organisation that has existed for over 100 years. It has a proven track record of delivering for its local community, and delivering very well. I was certainly pleased to be involved in the celebrations, both here in Bunbury and in Busselton, for the centenary of those water boards. That organisation has a long history of providing that vital service to its local community, and it is willing to enter into an agreement with the Water Corporation to provide the water, but without this legislation there is a stopper in the form of the old, restrictive act.

The Water Corporation and the Busselton Water Board, and also the Bunbury Water Board, have achieved a much higher level of cooperation over the past five years or so. There were times when they saw each other as competitors, and there were issues as to whether one was perhaps trying to steal a bit of the other's patch. I think that led to less than harmonious relationships in the past. As I said, over the past four or five years at least, a very good working relationship has been established between those different water utilities. They ought to be commended on that. When it came to advising government on water reform, they were able to talk to each other and put positions to government on which they were not seen as competitors, but as bodies working together. Based on that, we have seen a very good relationship between the Busselton Water Board and the Water Corporation, with Busselton saying, "We have water we can supply to you. The Water Corp has a growth area in Dunsborough and surrounds. Why don't we do a deal?" This bill will enable that to take place.

An earlier speaker asked whether this would create a problem into the future. That is something for which we need water planning. The current licence limits to Busselton, and to a lesser extent to Bunbury, mean that there is within their allocation sufficient water for quite a large amount of growth. We are not currently pushing towards the limits of the very good groundwater supplies in the Yarragadee and in other underground aquifers that lie under this region. I do not think there is currently an issue there, but if we do not follow through with proper water planning, we could get to a situation, as the member for Collie-Preston expressed concern about, that we could set up all the infrastructure and raise expectations, and then find we have overdrawn that important water resource, and then have to try to patch matters up afterwards because we have not planned properly. In a moment I will talk about the need to plan properly to ensure that we can provide that water into the future and that we will not be spending money in setting up a system that is not sustainable.

While I will not talk about that at length, that was a critical ingredient in the decision of the last government, the Gallop government, to go with the Kwinana seawater desalination plant rather than bring water from the south west Yarragadee. The south west Yarragadee is a fantastic resource and it will provide water to many communities for, it is hoped, centuries to come if it is properly managed. Some \$700 million of infrastructure

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would be needed to tap into that south west Yarragadee in a major way, well beyond what is currently being utilised. But if through climate change and assessment of the impact on the environment the amount of water taken had to be scaled back, that \$700 million of infrastructure would be underutilised, depending on how much water we had to cut back on. With a seawater desalination plant, we know that the ocean will never run out of water. Again, the cost was roughly comparable—under \$800 million to put in a desalination plant—and that could be run at full capacity because the salt water from the ocean, the major input, would not be diminished at any time. If the decision were made to take a large number of gigalitres every year from south west Yarragadee, and the ongoing monitoring showed there was an impact, the usage would have to be scaled back. Although the south west Yarragadee is a fantastic resource—something that has accumulated over 10 000 years or more and, if managed properly, will be able to be used for thousands of years—we must ensure we advance the science and understanding of that water so that when we have such a major draw, it is sustainable and will not create an unacceptable environmental impact. Although the water here will in part I assume come from the Yarragadee, the draw that is required to go into the Dunsborough area will not be anything like that envisaged with a major-use scheme based on the Yarragadee. Therefore, the issue is that the bill, if supported, will enable this arrangement between the Busselton Water Board and the Water Corporation to provide water into that very rapidly growing area of Dunsborough and the area around there. However, as mentioned by an earlier speaker, the issue is: Why do we need this special little baby bill? Why do we need a bill of such a small number of words and clauses to deliver this? The problem in taking this approach is that it compounds problems going back for 20 or 30 years when we continually put in pieces of legislation to make minor amendments to water legislation in this state. We now have a situation whereby we have something like 14 different acts governing water in this state and they do not fit together very well. For example, the Water Boards Act 1904 requires this amending bill because of what would be seen by many members of the public as stupid limitations that do not allow the Busselton Water Board to effectively and easily trade water to the Water Corporation for people who live only a couple of kilometres outside the area. That is a simple example of the many restrictions and problems that exist when we have 14 different statutes governing water in this state.

The last government had a very clear goal to fix the problem, which arose from the leadership taken by Premier Geoff Gallop in 2001, whereas the previous Liberal government said that it had waterproofed Perth and that was all that mattered. Of course the previous Liberal government had not, but we are used to Liberal governments saying things that are not true; we hear it every day. The Liberal government spruiked—I think the now Minister for Health was the Minister for Water Resources at the time—that it had waterproofed Perth so it was not a problem. The Liberal government never mentioned climate change; it had not quite caught up with that but climate change has caught up with us. We have to deal with it and the consequences can be quite horrendous. Geoff Gallop recognised that we had a problem and he called a water summit. Again, the Liberals bagged it and said, “What are you talking about? There’s no problem with water.” However, Geoff Gallop actually listened to the scientists, heard about the problem and engaged the community, and out of that process Western Australia was recognised around Australia and the world for being a leader in water reform. We turned it around. The Indian Ocean Climate Initiative, the scientific study of the effect of climate change in the south west of Western Australia, is seen as the major bit of scientific work about the impact of climate change on a specific location anywhere around the globe. That study showed a movement of the rainfall pattern further south. One scientist suggests that it is about a 400-kilometre shift. Therefore, if we look at Geraldton’s rainfall for the past 100 years, if that prediction is right, that will be the rainfall somewhere south of Perth and what the rainfall used to be in Perth will be the rainfall somewhere in the south west.

Mr R.F. Johnson: If that prediction is right.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: If that prediction is right.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Exactly.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: But what we do know is that the best scientific information available backs that up. The 400 kilometre figure might not be right, but there is clearly a movement of weather patterns further south. The Minister for Police can say that the government does not believe that and that it does not believe in climate change. The government can say, “Full steam ahead, don’t worry about what’s happening out there.” But what will happen is that we as political leaders will be damned if we do not take action now. Members have only to look at what has happened to average rainfall and run-off over the past 100 years. People are happy when they see that we have had a bit of a run-off. The latest figure on the Water Corporation website, which is not necessarily up-to-date, shows that the run-off into all our dams for the winter just finished was 102 gigalitres. It may have been more because the figure on the website needs updating. Our average is 337 gigalitres. The long-term average for run-off into our hills dams, standardised because more dams have gone in, was well over 300 gigalitres a year—300 billion litres of run-off every year. So if in the winter just finished that we have had just over 100 gigalitres does not indicate that we have a problem, I do not know what will.

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Dr G.G. Jacobs: We have 70 gigalitres more in our dams than we had this time last year.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The minister says we have 70 gigalitres more than we did this time last year. Minister, how much of that is due to the Kwinana desalination plant?

Dr G.G. Jacobs: We have had 70 gigalitres more run-off in our dams that we had this time last year.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This is the problem: because the minister does not know his portfolio, he cannot answer the questions. I pointed out to the minister that the website shows just over 100 gigalitres extra run-off and the minister says that we have had 70 gigalitres more than last year. The dam level is 70 gigalitres more but the dams have had desalinated sea water pumped into them! Therefore, my question to the minister, and I will put this on notice so he should get it in his office, is: how much of the water now in our hills storage dams originated from the Kwinana saltwater desalination plant? Can the minister answer?

Dr G.G. Jacobs: We have, as I said, 70 gigalitres more run-off into our dams —
Several members interjected.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thank the minister for his interjection. He has said that we have 70 gigalitres more run-off than last year. Minister, what has been the run-off into our hills dams this winter?

Dr G.G. Jacobs: We have 70 gigalitres more run-off into our dams than this time last year!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I think we have something like one of those little monkeys that when one turns the handle, it keeps saying the same thing; it is not answering the question.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: It is quite clear.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The question I asked the minister was: what was the run-off into our hills dams in the winter just finished? The minister is saying it is 70 gigalitres more than last year but he does not know what that was. He does not even know what it is and he is the Minister for Water! The minister cannot tell us what the run-off into our hills dams was at the end of winter. Do we have to worry about the government actually understanding climate change and understanding the need to have policies that will provide water into the future and preserve our environment? The minister cannot even tell us what the run-off into our hills dams was for the winter just finished; all he can say is that it was 70 gigalitres more than last year. If members get their computers and look on the Water Corporation website, it states there was 102 gigalitres for the winter just finished. That figure is only up to late September, so a few more gigalitres may have gone in since then but it will not be much over 100 gigalitres. Therefore, the minister is telling us that last year we had only 30-plus gigalitres of run-off. That is the implication.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: I recognise that the member is making an argument about climate change, and I recognise climate change and the difficulty we have had in getting water into our dams. I am saying that we were fortunate this year from the good rains that we have had that we have more water running off our catchments into our dams than last year. That amounts to 70 gigalitres. How clear is that?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thank the minister for his interjection.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: However, the minister has to know more than simply learn a number that he can use in a media release. If the minister wants to deal with the importance of water in this state, and also I believe the considerable challenges we have posed by climate change and huge population growth and growth in industry, then we have a major problem as it requires a minister who learns more than simply a one-liner to give to the media. The minister cannot tell us the run-off for this year; he says only that it was 70 gigalitres more than last year. On the minister's figures, using the figure from the Water Corporation website, the minister is saying that we had only 30 to 40 millimetres last year. That is wrong.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: You said "millimetres".

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Gigalitres, right.

The minister said that we had 70 gigalitres more than last year, which means there were only 30 to 40 gigalitres of run-off last year. That is not true. Therefore, I make the point that the minister needs to get across his portfolio if people are going to have any confidence that he will help protect us to ensure that we have the water that we need into the future.

I come back to the water reform agenda to touch on it very briefly, because if that was being implemented, this Water Boards Act 1904 would not still be in effect and we would not need the Busselton Water Board (Supply of Water to Dunsborough) Bill 2009; we would actually have a whole set of new legislation. The then Gallop

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government put huge expenditure in place. The desalination plant was just one example of that. That was the first major desal plant anywhere in Australia. It won the seawater Desalination Plant of the Year award internationally for having the leading technology.

Dr K.D. Hames: Yes. You still haven't thanked me for getting it all prepared for you.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Minister for Health wants to claim that he did it. This is the minister who claimed he had waterproofed Perth. He read an article once on desalination, so he is the father of desalination. Because someone spoke to him once way back in the distant past, that makes him the father of desal. That is what we have from this government. We have a government that is very light on the truth. It is all into spin and deception, but it is very light when it comes to the truth. However, I will not go back over all of that huge program, which made us a leader in water in Australia and internationally. I want to touch on just one part, which was putting in place modern, effective legislation. The process was started to do two things. The first was to get rid of those 14 acts, and to update and unify them so that we would have, at the most, three or four acts of Parliament relating to water in this state. On top of that, it would deal with the whole water resource management issue. Because we committed to the National Water Initiative, it became part of the national agenda. This was going to make water trading much easier. Of course, in this bill, we see an example of a type of water trading, even though it is more of a deal between just two entities. However, all that was seen as being very important for guaranteeing our water supply in the future.

What has this government done? This government has dropped the ball.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: What did you do?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: What did we do? We built a desal plant. We did the first water trade of significance in Australia. We did thing after thing after thing, which gave us recognition, even on the front page of newspapers in New York, that WA was leading the world in water. That is what we did. The rest of the world recognised it. But those people over there on the other side are so worried about giving any credit to a Labor government that they deny the truth. They deny the truth time and again because they do not like it if it does not fit their own very narrow political view.

I will come to another little thing that I took today from the Department of Water's website. It is headed "New water services legislation", and I quote —

Laws covering the powers and responsibilities of water services providers have not kept pace with major institutional changes over the past 15 to 20 years.

Many parts of the legislation are now outdated and have been made more complex by amendments made over time to numerous related Acts.

As a result, the State Government released for public comment the Review of Western Australia's Water Service Legislation Draft Report in February 2007.

Further down it states —

Drafting instructions for the new Bill(s) are currently being prepared and expected to be tabled in Parliament in December 2007.

That appears today on the Department of Water's website. That is what we did in 2007. There is no update. What has this government done since? Clearly, I would have liked the bill to be drafted a lot quicker, but it was a major piece of drafting. We were aiming to have it completed by the end of 2007, but it simply was not practical. I was too ambitious. We went into 2008, and I was not going to bring legislation into the Parliament in the run-up to an election, because, clearly, water legislation is controversial, and I knew that we would not get it through.

I was involved in a select committee of the Parliament in 1992. In 1992, about 10 years' work had been put into modernising our water legislation. We had a select committee of the Parliament, on which I served, to review that draft legislation. That draft legislation was sunk by the Liberals. Richard Lewis was the then opposition water spokesperson, and it was a Lawrence Labor government. That draft legislation was sunk because the Liberals said at that stage that if people owned the land, they owned the water. That is what they wanted included in the legislation. That is arrant nonsense. Everyone knows that today, and most people knew it in 1992, but not the Liberals. That is what they hold on to. On the whole west coast where groundwater is so important, can members imagine that one irrigator who owned a piece of land could be allowed to draw as much water as he wanted from that land, which would lower the watertable in every swamp and wetland around the area and draw all the water from his neighbours' wells? That is what the Liberals wanted back in 1992. That legislation simply did not proceed because we knew that the Liberals would not support it, and they had the numbers in the upper house. With that history in mind, I was not going to bring on the legislation when we knew that there

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would be an election at the end of 2008 or early in 2009 and we would not get that legislation through. However, it was well advanced in terms of consulting with all the groups and bringing that forward.

That was in 2007 and into 2008. We are now near the end of 2009, and all we see on the Department of Water's website is what was happening in 2007. There is a challenge for the current minister. Will he have a vision of what he wants to do? I do not expect he will want to do the same as I did. He might want to do something quite different. But when we have such a complex issue, with all the interests that are out there and with the complexity of the legislation that we have, we must have a minister who has a vision and will drive it, or nothing will happen. As we have seen from the minister's earlier interjection, when it comes to water, he does not have the basic facts, so how can he have a vision? How can the minister drive a plan to secure our water future when he does not even understand the basic facts?

I will take two things that were said in question time today. The Minister for Water said that a bill that Labor introduced—it would have been mine—just a few years ago was disallowed. Everyone knows that a bill cannot be disallowed. It can be voted down, but it cannot be disallowed. What was disallowed, minister, were regulations on water licensing charges. However, the minister said that the bill was disallowed. It was not. The bill went through, but some water licence fees were disallowed. The Minister for Water also said that owners of turkey nest dams would have to pay a tax or a licence fee. That was never our proposal.

Dr G.G. Jacobs: That's what people out there thought.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: A lot of people say stuff out there. But, again, I thank the minister for the interjection. We have a perfect example of a minister who does not know what is happening. Someone whispers in his ear and he responds to the media, but he does not even know the basic facts. Turkey nest dams were not to be caught by our licensing fees. I said that umpteen times to various farmers and irrigator groups, but there is a contentious issue, because some people do not want the change and, therefore, they misrepresent the position. I do not know where that is at now, but I do know that the minister does not know, and that is my worry. I am not the Minister for Water; I am not even the shadow spokesman for water. The minister himself is not sure what is happening out there. Then the Premier also suggested that there was going to be no tax on farmers' dams. By that, I presume the Premier meant no water licence fee. Is that what he meant?

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Did the Premier not say that? Did he not say that there would be no tax on farmers' dams?

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Less than two hours ago the Premier said that there would be no tax on farmers' dams.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, on turkey nest, stand-alone dams.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am just trying to get this clear. What is the Premier talking about?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We see that we have a government led by a Premier who cannot be forthright and speak the truth. He came into this place and said in this debate today that there would be no tax on dams—he is the Premier. I can understand a bit of a flourish and reaching a bit beyond, but now I am asking him to be specific. He has the opportunity to do so. There will be no tax on what sorts of dams, and what is the regime? Will the Premier interject and tell me specifically what he meant? There will not be what?

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, we're not going to do that.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The government is not going to do what?

Mr C.J. Barnett: For goodness sake! I've answered about three times. We're not putting a tax on turkey nest dams.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There never was going to be, but that is not what the Premier said earlier today. I am glad he clarified that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is what I meant by farm dams.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Right. There never was going to be.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We're not talking about barrages across rivers or creeks.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: So the Premier is saying that the government is not going to tax it if it is across a river.

Dr K.D. Hames: That's not what he said.

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I just want to get it clear. I am giving the Premier the chance to interject and make it clear.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I've made it clear. I've said it three times.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Members!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This is a typical example of a Premier who simply cannot speak honestly and openly to the people of this state. This is an important issue to a lot of stakeholders. It is important to the future of guaranteeing security of water to the state. We have a Premier who interjects, and when I give him the opportunity to respond and clarify what he means, he will not.

Mr C.J. Barnett: I did. Everyone over here heard. I'm not doing it for the fourth time.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: But the *Hansard* has not got it.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Read *Hansard* tomorrow. I'm not playing this game. I've answered it three or four times already. Everyone over here heard it.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: He has not answered the question, but that is the way he uses weasel words to get out of answering questions. This is a Premier who continues to use weasel words, because he will not be forthright and identify the dams on which he does or does not intend to slap a tax or licence fee. When given the opportunity to do so, he simply moves away from the question. That does not give the people much confidence that we have a government that will meet the challenges of climate change, secure our water future and put in place the legislation and expenditure we need to address those issues.

Climate change is something that nearly everyone accepts, although there may be a few doubters on the government side. We have to be ready to deal with it but, unfortunately, with the change of government, we now have a minister who thinks it is something that can be just left to trundle along. He thinks that we do not need to be too worried about it and that we do not really need to do too much. The government has already delayed the second southern desalination plant at Binningup by six months. It has done deals that have resulted in a reduction in the amount of water that will be available. It is hoping—probably praying—that it will rain, but that does not amount to political leadership for ensuring the security of our water future.

The government is very keen on and proud of its Ord River project, but there is a problem with the Ord River; the Treasurer will be very interested in this. If we do not meet the requirements of the National Water Initiative—we may be able to do a deal with the commonwealth government to back off on some of them—it is my understanding that the nearly \$200 million in commonwealth government funding, which has to fit in with the NWI —

Mr B.J. Grylls interjected.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member is saying that it does not?

Mr B.J. Grylls: The commonwealth money is for social infrastructure.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Does the government not have to meet NWI requirements?

Mr T.R. Buswell: Get with the program; you're on top of it all!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am not on top of the deals that the state government has done with the commonwealth government. I know that the state government has received money, and my understanding is that water money had to meet the requirements of the NWI, but the government is now saying that it is not water money, coming out of a different bucket.

Mr T.R. Buswell: They've got big buckets.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Treasurer is very quick to try to get his hands on it for this state, and we support him in that endeavour. It is a pity that he has not done as well as we would like him to. The opposition supports the bill.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [5.12 pm]: As someone who was not a member of either the Carpenter or Gallop governments, I begin my speech by acknowledging the tremendous role played by both Premier Geoff Gallop and Premier Alan Carpenter in managing our water resources in Western Australia. It was Premier Gallop who created the position of Minister for Water Resources and who was, indeed, himself Minister for Water Resources. Water management in Western Australia was thus elevated in importance to a portfolio held by the most senior minister in the state government. The portfolio then went to another senior minister, Hon John Kobelke, the current member for Balcatta. There is no doubt that there has long been recognition in the Labor Party of the importance of good water management in Western Australia. That was best demonstrated by some

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of the programs put in place by the former government, such as the security through diversity water management strategy and others, which ensured that we did not rely on only one or two sources for our water supplies and which brought about many other initiatives. The Busselton Water Board (Supply of Water to Dunsborough) Bill reflects one such initiative—the concept of water trading. The opposition therefore supports this bill wholeheartedly. It will enable us to enhance our level of water supply diversity in Western Australia.

I now turn to some of the points that have been raised in this debate. It is clear from some previous exchanges that the Minister for Water is unclear about the extent of run-off into our dams and catchments. I wonder whether he has a greater degree of clarity on the amount of rainfall we have had this winter. It is interesting to note that in 2009, although there may have been an increase in the amount of run-off, figures for the Perth area indicate that we have had only 567 millimetres of rainfall compared with an average of some 807 millimetres. In other words, we are 240 millimetres behind the average. I think it would be very optimistic for anyone in this Parliament to expect 240 millimetres of rainfall between now and the end of the year. We are feeling the consequences of climate change. The most acute manifestation of climate change in the south west of Western Australia is the decline in annual rainfall. A 20 per cent decline in annual rainfall has a dramatic impact on the recharge of aquifers and the refilling of dams. It is curious that members opposite have such an obsession with recharging dam capacities when we know that 50 per cent to 60 per cent of a glass of water provided by the Water Corporation comes from the aquifer system, not from dams. In the south west of this state, groundwater is of the utmost importance to our water supply.

What ideas about water supply have come from those opposite? In 2005, the now Premier floated the absolutely absurd idea of a canal from the Kimberley—the cane toad superhighway! It would have brought cane toads to this part of the state and into the south west, it would have degraded the state's environmental values, and it would have totally thrown out good water planning. Fortunately, the Gallop government was able to win the day, and we have not seen the absurdity of the canal from the Kimberley in this state.

We have seen other problems to do with water supply and the fact that this government is not adequately tackling the issue. These problems relate to how much effort we are putting into encouraging good water conservation. It is something that we have to work on. We know that the Carpenter and Gallop governments had an excellent record for delivering water conservation initiatives and big-ticket items such as the desalination plants. Those governments provided desalination plants and led the way across Australia in ensuring that those plants were powered by renewable energy. They set a trend right across the country; so much so —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Members, the member for Gosnells has the floor. If he wants to take an interjection, he is more than welcome to, but he will tell members when he does.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Those desalination plants are leading the way in Australia. The Binningup desalination plant will use a very significant percentage of innovative renewable energy systems, and not just the stock-standard renewable energy of wind farms. The fact is that there is a huge difference between the present government and the former government in the management of water resources and the desire to tackle new initiatives. Perhaps most disturbingly of all, this is a government that still does not really understand the intricacies of the impacts of climate change on the south west of this state. Statistics for Jarrahdale reveal that between 1911 and 1974, there was an average of some 1 251 millimetres of rain a year; we are now looking at 980 millimetres a year—a 21 per cent decline in annual rainfall.

If we have a government that is in denial about the facts of climate change, we have real problems. I recommend that members opposite get onto the mad uncles in their party to let them know that they should support the Prime Minister when he goes to Copenhagen. We need to ensure that Australia is part of the leading group that has the very best global climate change policies in place to stabilise our global emissions, through an emissions trading scheme that will allow for a variety of power generation sources, provided they keep within the emissions cap that will be set through that scheme. We need to ensure that Australia is able to contribute and be a lead player so that we do not feel any more dramatic consequences than we have already felt on our levels of rainfall in the south west of Western Australia.

I support this bill and look forward to hearing about future initiatives from the government that will help us achieve greater security through diversity of our water supply.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [5.20 pm]: Madam Acting Speaker —

Mr C.C. Porter: Back to the theatre, member. What light beyond the window breaks?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I did not think my approach to the dispatch box would cause such attention, but I am very pleased —

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Mr C.J. Barnett: Look, your usual audience is here!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have played to smaller audiences than that, I can tell members!

This is a very important issue, although it is a good thing to tread the boards here in Bunbury at the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre. I have not actually trod on these boards as a performer before. It is a very nice facility. I note by the scribbles behind the stage some of the notables who have performed here. Max Gillies is mentioned. I have been here, though, to see a few performances. I acknowledge the members of the South West Opera Company who have performed here. I remember coming to a performance of theirs, *Les Misérables*, which was very good. Also, some great amateur theatre has been performed here.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Bring back the hippies!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I could go on to talk about the hippies, but that has nothing to do with the water issue that we are talking about. However, I am sure that members on both sides of the house would find it very interesting, and I could go on about that. Given that we are considering performance places, it was interesting to note some very good comments that were made earlier today about this bill. They reminded me of a wonderful comment from Noel Coward about the theatre—I will take note of this—who said, “Just say the lines and don’t trip over the furniture.” That is a very good quote and I am going to stick to the lines today.

I will first of all refer to some of the commitments and indeed contributions of the Labor Party to this south west region with regard to water, and particularly water infrastructure. I want to go through those because I was very interested to note that the Deputy Premier and member for Dawesville tried to claim credit for the desalination plant. How interesting! I hope he claims credit for the areas of his electorate, such as Falcon, Dawesville and Wannanup, that have lost their infill sewerage program. Where was he then? I did not hear him talk about that. He claimed credit for the desalination plant, which the Gallop government commissioned and opened, but he has not said one thing about his constituents of Dawesville, Falcon and Wannanup who have had funding to their infill sewerage program slashed. He is silent on that. He is very careful to say a few things when he thinks he can make a few points, but when he actually —

Dr K.D. Hames: I am happy to share credit with Gallop.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Where are they? The Deputy Premier and member for Dawesville’s constituents in Falcon, Dawesville and Wannanup, to mention a few, have now had funding to their sewerage program slashed.

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We are debating a specific bill. The comments from the current speaker have nothing to do with the bill whatsoever.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, they do.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Thank you, Leader of the House. Member for Mandurah, could you please keep to the bill we are debating?

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Madam Acting Speaker, it is very important that we talk about water infrastructure. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about a particular part of Western Australia in the south west, but there are many other areas in Western Australia that require appropriate water infrastructure. It is very interesting that the Deputy Premier and member for Dawesville interjects when he knows that he has been found out. All I am doing is highlighting to him issues about his constituency—not mine. My constituency has lots of infill sewerage because Labor invested very heavily in that and made sure of it. However, the Deputy Premier and member for Dawesville has left members of his constituency in the lurch. He left them in the lurch with regard to fishing. He scampered off to Perth and made sure he was not in his electorate when all the debate was going on about fishing issues, and now he is hiding because of what has happened to his constituents’ infill sewerage funding.

I will come back to the bill that we are debating, which, of course, is the issue of connecting the good people of Dunsborough to an improved water supply. Of course the good people of Dunsborough well know that they live in a part of the south that is seeing massive population growth; it is the leading area in population growth when compared with many parts of Australia. As we know, the south west of Western Australia, including the Peel region, remains one of the hotspots of population growth. It is also a hotspot because of climate change and biodiversity issues. We know that when we are planning for important infrastructure—in this case we are talking about important water infrastructure for the people of Dunsborough and for the people of the wider south west—we must consider that infrastructure very carefully and produce good strategies. We must make sure that we have the right plan. The member for Balcatta very clearly highlighted that this government has no plan; that is

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the sad thing. This government is relying on getting by on a wing and a prayer to solve the state's water issues. We need only look back at 2001 when then Premier Gallop highlighted that there was a need to address the dire water situation in Western Australia. The Labor government called in experts and community members from around the state for a water summit. We brought together people from all backgrounds. It created a huge amount of interest. What did we hear from the now Premier back then? We heard that there was no water crisis; there was no water problem; there was no water issue at all. How pathetic!

Dr K.D. Hames: You got my cabinet submission.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Dawesville should not go on about his cabinet submission. Where is his cabinet submission for returning sewerage infrastructure to the people of his own constituency? He does not have it! He does not have the plan. I do not know what he is doing in Dawesville; I have not seen him there.

I will tell members, though, what the Labor government did in the south west region. I will run through a couple of very important water projects that were delivered. Of course, this is the foundation of what we are talking about tonight in terms of the delivery of appropriate infrastructure ultimately to the people of Dunsborough. The Kemerton waste water treatment plant and effluent management system was allocated \$7 million; the Bunbury waste water commitment, \$8.7 million; the Dalyellup water supply, \$2.7 million; the Australind clear water tank, \$2.5 million; the Eaton water upgrade, in another big area that is growing rapidly in this greater Bunbury area, \$1.5 million; the Eaton infill sewerage program, \$7.3 million—I cannot see Dawesville, Wannanup or Falcon in there; and, of course, the Aqwest city water link project, 7.5 million. They are just some of the projects that were delivered during our time in government in the past eight years.

They are very important projects that recognise some very important things. The first, of course, is that this area is rapidly growing. Its population is increasing and appropriate infrastructure is needed. Also in our time of government, some of what I consider to be critical decisions were made by Premier Gallop and, later, Premier Carpenter. Despite the criticism of the now government, Western Australia's pre-eminent desalination plant in Kwinana was commissioned. The member for Balcatta detailed the accolades that that project received. In fact it was the trigger for a range of other desalination projects throughout Australia. Most states, if not all, particularly those on the eastern seaboard, have now gone down the line of commissioning desalination plants as a major part of their water strategy. But Western Australia was the leader, because the leadership of the Labor Party saw clearly that if we were to secure a water future for this state, those sorts of decisions and that sort of investment were critical.

Then we witnessed the debate about what our next water source would be, with a growing population and growing demand, and the debate on the further exploitation of the south west Yarragadee aquifer. This was a massive issue for the people of the south west in particular. Members of Parliament saw a range of public comment and outcry about whether the south west Yarragadee should be further exploited as the next water source for the interconnected system. The Labor government decided that further exploitation of that aquifer was not the best option. The best option was to commission a second desalination plant. Investment in that plant was aimed at ensuring that we had a water source that was not reliant on run-off or rainfall. We have had some improvement in rainfall this year, but everyone has seen the graphs produced by the Water Corporation and other scientists representing Western Australia's rainfall over the past 100 years or so. They clearly show that average rainfall has declined markedly since the 1970s.

However, there are still sceptics on the other side of politics who do not acknowledge climate change as a real threat to the future lifestyle of Western Australians. We need to look only as far as the federal member for Tangney, Dr Dennis Jensen, who has always been a climate change sceptic. His suggestion for combating climate change was to string up some shade sails out in space to filter the sun's rays hitting the earth. I was amazed by that sort of comment from a person who is supposed to be a learned scientist, but that is typical of many sceptics within the government at the moment. The sad thing is that water security for Western Australia is a critical issue if we want to see the state develop.

To provide the important infrastructure for the increasing populations in the Peel and south west regions, we must make sure that we have very clear and effective strategies. For that to happen, we need a very effective Minister for Water supported by a very effective Premier. Unfortunately, the track record shows that, after one year, that is not what we see in the Liberal-National government. That is sad, because water security is far more important than some of the other issues that are debated in this place. I urge the Minister for Water, the Premier and the government to recognise that if Western Australia is to regain its place as the leader in water security, the minister needs to get a handle on his portfolio—I am not confident that he has that grasp—and the Premier also needs to demonstrate strong leadership like that demonstrated by former Premiers Gallop and Carpenter.

When the people of Western Australia look at the report cards and consider which party in government over the past 20 years recognised the importance of water security and made decisions to benefit the communities of

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Western Australia, the Labor Party will be shown as the party that led this state effectively and achieved world-class results. The Premier and the Minister for Water are not only dragging their feet, but also are putting the people of Western Australia in grave danger. They are not responding to the real issues about water security in the future. Opposition members will support this bill, but we will be looking very carefully for leadership from this government on future water strategy. The minister has scrapped programs such as infill sewerage and the water rebate scheme, and has done nothing to secure a water future for the people of Western Australia. I am very proud of the Labor record, and I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to debate this bill and to focus on water as an important issue for the future.

DR G.G. JACOBS (Eyre — Minister for Water) [5.36 pm] — in reply: I thank members of the opposition for their contributions tonight, and for their support of the Busselton Water Board (Supply of Water to Dunsborough) Bill 2009. During the summer months, the Dunsborough water supply approaches peak capacity of something like 10.3 megalitres a day. I thank the member for Balcatta for his comments, and for his efforts as the Minister for Water Resources in the previous government to establish water security for Western Australia. Of course, we need to do more.

The Water Corporation has proposed upgrades to the existing scheme to take place in 2009-10, to provide forecast additional capacity of 3.6 megalitres a day; in the out years to 2016-17, another 3.6 megalitres a day; and then from 2026-27, another 10 megalitres a day. Members opposite have correctly forecast the demands of the growing region of Dunsborough. There will be a total increase in demand and capacity of around 17.2 megalitres a day. In order to meet that demand in Dunsborough, the upgrade by the Water Corporation, which administers that jurisdiction—Busselton is covered by the Busselton Water Board—faced a cost of something like \$10.5 million. Further demands and upgrades can be expected beyond 2026-27.

The member for Collie-Preston asked about the capacity of Busselton Water and the south west Yarragadee aquifer. Recently, I released the south west allocation plan. It is about planning, and the science of trying to identify what we have in a consumptive pool. What is the reserve? Since 2006, the Bunbury Water Board and the Water Corporation have been discussing entering into a water supply agreement to do the commonsense thing of taking water from where there is water—that is, in the Busselton jurisdiction—and taking it across the jurisdictional border, which is essentially an artificial border, into an area which needs it and where there is a growing need. By entering into this commonsense proposal, the Water Corporation would delay its planned expenditure to upgrade the Dunsborough water supply scheme, which would be a solution. As some members, particularly the member for Balcatta, have said, good communication has meant that the Water Corporation, the Busselton Water Board and Aqwest, or Bunbury Water Board, have had the ability to talk and to work out plans that have the common good of supplying a much-needed resource. Just today I was able to meet with representatives of the Water Corporation, Busselton Water and Bunbury Water to talk about the various issues. Of course, this issue arose in those conversations today. Everybody is on board because they think this is a very good, sensible idea to supply the needs of Dunsborough. It is good value for money and a good spend of resource.

I think it was the member for Cockburn who asked for some details about infrastructure issues. Essentially, the transfer of this water will require the Water Corporation to install about 2.5 kilometres of pipeline to connect the Dunsborough water supply scheme to the Busselton water supply scheme. A dosing module to chlorinate the Bunbury Water Board water will also entail some cost. I probably need to flesh out those issues for members. I understand that there are some issues of commercial confidentiality in allowing this to proceed via a water services agreement. This legislation essentially allows for that water service agreement to be drawn up. The combined cost of this infrastructure and the water transfer across jurisdictions is approximately \$1.6 million. In this communication, the Bunbury Water Board has presented the Water Corporation with an option to supply 23 megalitres of water a day in additional capacity over the next 65 years. Depending on demand, the additional capacity would be phased in. Initially, there would be incremental stages over a 15-year period. There are some very sensible suggestions here. This legislation will allow a water services agreement to be drawn up to effect this transfer. In order for this to happen, the Water Corporation and the Busselton Water Board wish to enter into a water supply agreement, which would allow the Bunbury Water Board to augment its water supply. The water supply arrangement would enable the Water Corporation to supply water to Dunsborough, as I hope I have outlined, at a significantly lower cost than the other alternatives. The advice we received from the State Solicitor's Office is that under sections 62 and 62A of the Water Boards Act 1904, which has been elucidated in previous speeches, the Bunbury Water Board does not have the authority to enter into a water supply agreement of this nature. The government conducted an extensive review of options to overcome this legislative impediment, as it were. This bill, which with members' support will become an act, was shown to be the most straightforward solution. It will modify the operation of the Water Boards Act 1904 to allow this to happen.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 20 October 2009]

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Mr Fran Logan; Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr David Templeman; Mr Rob Johnson; Dr Graham Jacobs

In the last few minutes of this speech, I will talk about some of the issues that members of the opposition have raised, and thank them for their contribution. It is true that, to bring the water legislation into the twenty-first century, we will have to incorporate 14 acts into three acts. The water trading component of the water services bill needs to be reviewed. The water services bill is one of those bills that needs to become an act. I will address some of the concerns of the member for Collie-Preston, who was concerned that the boards would be taken away when they need to be supported. They do need to be supported. A new water authorities bill, which would become an act, would give Busselton Water and Bunbury Water the same legislative management and administration that applies to the Water Corporation. In my meetings today, representatives of Busselton Water and Bunbury Water were very encouraging about this happening. They are very supportive of this legislation.

The water resources management bill deals with the management of water resources in Western Australia. We have gone some way to introducing a water allocation plan. We released the south west water allocation plan and, as the member for Balcatta said, we recently released the Whicher area surface water allocation plan. The issue is about planning for the resource. The opposition has criticised us, but we are moving towards reviewing the Water Boards Act 1904. We intend that the water resources management amendment bill should have a white paper stage and a green paper consultation stage. It is very important to ensure that we do not have any misinformation or misperception of any of the issues, which I often encounter as minister when I visit the south west.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Minister, could you give any target dates for the release of that paper?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: This process will go on into the parliamentary sessions of next year.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Do you have a target date for the release of your white paper that you have just promised?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The white paper will be released in the first quarter of next year, this year being essentially finished. We will then have a green paper, which will involve consultation. That consultation must be done properly because the water resources management bill is an important part of the three bills that will replace the 14 acts that presently need to be brought into the twenty-first century.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Minister, will you also progress the other bills?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: They will be progressed sooner than that, and the water services bill will be progressed very shortly in this place.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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