

10/2/03

Financial incentives to promote water efficiency and higher charges for water 'guzzlers' are two of the key initiatives in the State Water Strategy released today.

Premier Geoff Gallop unveiled the multi-million dollar strategy that contains a range of measures to secure Western Australia's water future.

"The water shortage we are currently experiencing has clearly shown us that the Government cannot solve this problem on its own - we need the co-operation of the community, industry and local government," Dr Gallop said.

"The State Water Strategy is a multi-faceted approach that rewards water efficiency and penalises water wastage.

"The community is already playing an important role in water conservation by abiding by two-day-a-week sprinkler restrictions, but we want to provide financial incentives to encourage further efficiencies.

"We have established a \$7million Waterwise rebate program to encourage the uptake of products such as rainwater tanks, water efficient washing machines, low-flow shower heads and garden bores."

Purchasers of Waterwise products from tomorrow (February 11) will be eligible for rebates of up to \$300. Details of the rebates are available by phoning 1300 133 646.

Charges for water wasters will be increased under the strategy, while charges for other consumers will be limited to increases in the Consumer Price Index.

"The clear message from the new water prices is that if you are a water guzzler, you will be hit with higher prices," Dr Gallop said.

For metropolitan consumers, the price of water consumed between 550-950 kilolitres will increase by up to 20 per cent to \$1.20 per kilolitre. For water consumed above 950kl the price will increase to \$1.50 per kilolitre.

The average household consumes 350kl a year.

Dr Gallop also announced that the Government would provide \$3million to set up the Premier's Water Foundation to fund water-related research and development activities in Western Australia.

"The Premier's Water Foundation is an exciting new fund aimed at investigating innovative ways of utilising and protecting our precious water resource," he said.

"The Government is putting \$3million into the foundation and we will be seeking supplementary funding from the Commonwealth and encouraging financial assistance from the private sector through tax-deductible incentives.

"Groundwater abstraction and recharge, salinity, desalination technology, recycling and water efficiency technology will be priority issues for the foundation."

The foundation will be chaired by leading Western Australian environmental scientist Charlie Welker.

Other key initiatives of the strategy include:

- a target of 20 per cent reuse of treated wastewater by 2012;
- development of two new dams at Samson Brook and Wokalup Creek in the South-West providing up to 23 gigalitres a year;
- a target consumption level of 155kL / person / year for consumers served by the Integrated Supply Scheme by 2012.
- continuation of the daytime sprinkler restrictions that apply from 9am to 6pm to all garden bores and extend the restrictions to local government; and
- a \$6million investigation to enable a decision to be made on water allocations from the Yarragadee project in the South-West, which could supply up to 45 gigalitres a year.

"There are no simple solutions to our water shortage - what we have delivered is a multi-faceted approach that combines new sources, new efficiency measures and innovative ways of re-using our wastewater," Dr Gallop said.

Copies of the strategy will be available at the Premier's website <http://www.premier.wa.gov.au> and at <http://www.ourwaterfuture.com.au> and from all public libraries. Limited hard copies are also available from the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 9222 9449 or toll free for outside metro area on 1800 198 274.