

**HON JOHN KOBELKE MLA
MINISTER ASSISTING
THE MINISTER FOR WATER RESOURCES**



**WUNGONG CATCHMENT ENVIRONMENT AND
WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT**

DATE: TUESDAY 26 APRIL 2005

TIME: NOON

LOCATION: WUNGONG DAM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **TIM UNGAR: CHAIRMAN OF WATER CORPORATION BOARD**
- **DR JIM GILL: WATER CORPORATION CEO**
- **LINTON REYNOLDS: MAYOR OF THE CITY OF ARMADALE**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS TRAVELLED HERE TO WUNGONG DAM TODAY, TO BE INVOLVED IN THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE PUBLIC REVIEW FOR THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT.

I'M PLEASED THAT ONE OF MY FIRST OFFICIAL PUBLIC DUTIES AS THE MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR WATER RESOURCES MARKS THE DELIVERY OF YET ANOTHER KEY ELEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S STATE WATER STRATEGY.

THAT STRATEGY WAS LAUNCHED IN 2003 BY THE PREMIER, IN RESPONSE TO THE SERIOUS IMPACTS BEING

EXPERIENCED BY THIS STATE AS A RESULT OF THE DRYING CLIMATE.

THE GALLOP GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT PROTECTING AND ENHANCING WA'S UNIQUE LIFESTYLE AND SECURING A DEPENDABLE WATER SUPPLY IS ESSENTIAL TO THAT.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A WORLDWIDE ISSUE, BUT HERE IN THE SOUTH WEST OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA IT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO A 10-20 PER CENT REDUCTION IN RAINFALL OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS.

THIS HAS LED TO A MASSIVE TWO-THIRDS REDUCTION IN RUN-OFF INTO THE DAMS SUPPLYING PERTH AND THE INTEGRATED WATER SUPPLY SCHEME.

TO GET A CLEAR IMPRESSION OF WHAT THIS MEANS, TAKE A WALK TO THE TOP OF DAM WALL, IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, AND HAVE A LOOK AT THE LESS THAN IMPRESSIVE STATE OF THE STORAGE LEVEL HERE AT WUNGONG DAM.

WUNGONG DAM IS CURRENTLY HOLDING ONLY ABOUT 29 PER CENT CAPACITY – WHICH IS SLIGHTLY MORE THAN THE AVERAGE 25 PER CENT STORAGE CAPACITY IN PERTH'S OTHER HILLS RESERVOIRS AT PRESENT.

WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE DRAMATIC DECLINE IN OUR STREAM FLOWS WILL END – IF IT WILL END AT ALL.

HOWEVER, AS CRITICAL AS OUR WATER SUPPLY SITUATION IS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASISE THAT OUR EXPANDED WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS AND GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES HAVE PROVIDED AN ADEQUATE AMOUNT OF WATER TO MEET OUR NEEDS.

MANY OTHER AUSTRALIAN STATES ARE EXPERIENCING TOTAL SPRINKLER BANS, WHILE WESTERN AUSTRALIA HAS MANAGED THE PAST FOUR SUMMERS WITH A TWO-DAY A WEEK SPRINKLER ROSTER.

AS A RESULT, WA HAS ACHIEVED AN AVERAGE SUMMER WATER SAVING OF 45 GIGALITRES (THAT'S 45 BILLION LITRES), WHILE KEEPING PERTH GREEN AND MAINTAINING JOBS IN THE STATE'S MANY GARDEN-RELATED INDUSTRIES.

THIS ACHIEVEMENT IS A TRIBUTE TO THE FORWARD PLANNING OF THE GALLOP GOVERNMENT AND THE WATER CORPORATION AND TO THE RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE TO WATER USE SHOWN BY NEARLY ALL WEST AUSTRALIANS.

THIS FORWARD THINKING IS INTEGRAL TO THE STATE WATER STRATEGY, WHICH IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT THERE IS NOT ONE SIMPLE SOLUTION TO OUR WATER SHORTAGE.

WESTERN AUSTRALIANS VALUE THEIR WATER WITH THE LIFESTYLE BENEFITS IT PROVIDES AND THE GALLOP GOVERNMENT IS WORKING ON SECURING THE STATE'S WATER FUTURE.

WHAT IS BEING DELIVERED IS A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH THAT COMBINES NEW SOURCES, NEW EFFICIENCY MEASURES AND INNOVATIVE WAYS OF REUSING OUR WASTEWATER.

THESE INITIATIVES RANGE FROM THE ROUTINE TO THE HIGHLY INNOVATIVE, BUT TOGETHER THEY HAVE BEEN VERY EFFECTIVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE.

THE STRATEGY INCLUDES DEMAND MANAGEMENT, WATER RECYCLING, DESALINATION, GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATER RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND WATER TRADING.

ONLY TWO WEEKS AGO, THE PREMIER ANNOUNCED THE SUCCESSFUL TENDERER FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF PERTH'S SEAWATER DESALINATION PLANT AT KWINANA, WHICH WILL BE DELIVERING WATER BY THE SUMMER OF 2006/07.

THE STRATEGY ALSO CLEARLY IDENTIFIED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AS A POTENTIAL LARGE WATER SOURCE.

FOREST THINNING, A KEY PART OF CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT, IS NOT A NEW IDEA.

FROM A FOREST MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE, IT HAS BEEN PRACTISED FOR MANY YEARS IN THE SOUTH WEST OF WA.

IN FACT, FORESTS IN THE WATER CORPORATION'S CATCHMENTS HAVE BEEN LOGGED FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY.

CURRENTLY, MOST OF THESE CATCHMENTS CONTAIN REGROWTH FORESTS, WHICH ARE OFTEN TOO DENSE AND USE MORE WATER THAN A MATURE OR OLD GROWTH FOREST.

THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT WILL BUILD ON MANY DECADES OF HYDROLOGICAL AND FOREST SCIENCE RELATED TO CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT.

THESE PAST STUDIES SHOWED A POSITIVE IMPACT ON WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY WITH A SUSTAINABLE INCREASE IN STREAM FLOW, WHICH WAS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO ONE BILLION LITRES OF EXTRA WATER FOR EACH ONE THOUSAND (1,000) HECTARES OF FOREST NON-COMMERCIALY THINNED.

HOWEVER, THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF THIS MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY ARE YET TO BE FULLY TESTED, WHICH IS WHY A STAGED APPROACH STARTING WITH THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT IS CONSIDERED SENSIBLE.

THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT IS PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE.

IT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE LOW-COST WATER FROM THE ANTICIPATED EXTRA YIELD, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THE WATER STORAGE AND DELIVERY INFRASTRUCTURE IS ALREADY IN PLACE.

THIS \$20-MILLION RESEARCH PROJECT WILL BE CONDUCTED BY THE WATER CORPORATION OVER A 12-YEAR PERIOD.

IT IS EXPECTED TO RECOVER ON AVERAGE AN EXTRA FOUR TO SIX BILLION LITRES OF RUN-OFF WATER ANNUALLY AT A COST OF ABOUT 25 CENTS PER THOUSAND LITRES.

IT WILL INVOLVE THE THINNING OF SELECTED TREES IN CROWDED REGROWTH FORESTS AND MINING REHABILITATION FORESTS.

IN THE AREAS TO BE TREATED, THE FOCUS WILL BE ON NON-COMMERCIAL THINNING AND THE RETAINED TREES WILL BE ABOUT 5 TO 6 METRES APART, WHEREAS THE CURRENT THE SPACING IS ABOUT HALF THAT.

IT WILL ALSO INCLUDE THE STAGED REPLACEMENT OF EXOTIC TREES WITH NATIVE FORESTS.

THE AIM IS TO HAVE FORESTS WITH A MATURE NATIVE STRUCTURE.

THE AMOUNT OF RUN-OFF WATER THAT COULD BE RECOVERED IN THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT ALONE IS SIGNIFICANT.

IT REPRESENTS ABOUT A 25 PERCENT IMPROVEMENT ON THE AVERAGE STREAM FLOW INTO THE WUNGONG RESERVOIR, WHICH PROVIDES FIVE PER CENT OF WATER FOR PERTH AND THE INTEGRATED WATER SUPPLY SCHEME.

WATER QUALITY IN THE WUNGONG RESERVOIR IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE, SO THE WATER CORPORATION WILL CONTINUE TO UNDERTAKE REGULAR MONITORING TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE AUSTRALIAN DRINKING WATER GUIDELINES.

IMPORTANTLY, THE RESEARCH PLANNED FOR THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT POTENTIALLY HAS WIDER APPLICATIONS.

IF THE COMMUNITY AND REGULATORS ARE COMFORTABLE WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND WATER OUTCOMES OF THIS INITIATIVE, SIMILAR FOREST

MANAGEMENT COULD BE APPLIED TO OTHER WATER CATCHMENTS SERVING THE METROPOLITAN AREA.

THIS LONGER-TERM WORK HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DELIVER AN EXTRA 40 BILLION LITRES OF WATER RUN-OFF INTO PERTH'S RESERVOIRS.

THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT HAS BEEN DESIGNED IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS.

THIS HAS ENSURED THAT IT IS BEST PRACTICE AND CONSISTENT WITH THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN.

THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER AND IS BASED ON SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES.

THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AND DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AGREE THAT THIS PROJECT IS CONSISTENT WITH THAT PLAN.

AS WELL AS BEING OPERATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT AND ECONOMICALLY USEFUL IN TERMS OF INCREASED WATER PRODUCTION, THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT WAS

SELECTED AS THE PREFERRED CATCHMENT BECAUSE OF ITS RELATIVELY SMALL SIZE.

WUNGONG IS CLOSE TO PERTH AND ITS HAS A WELL DOCUMENTED HISTORY, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO STREAM FLOW.

IT HAS NO OLD GROWTH FOREST REMAINING AND IT HAS BEEN DISTURBED IN THE PAST BY FARMING, LOGGING, PINE PLANTATIONS, DIEBACK AND MINING.

IT COMPRISES AN AREA OF ABOUT 130 SQUARE KILOMETRES, WHICH IS A MOSAIC OF DIFFERENT TREE TYPES, DIFFERENT AGE PROFILES AND AREAS OF DIFFERING ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE.

ABOUT 62 PER CENT OF THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT WILL BE TARGETED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL WATER MANAGEMENT.

THE REMAINING AREA WILL NOT BE TOUCHED, EXCEPT BY CALM'S PRESCRIBED BURNING, AND IT WILL CONTAIN FORMAL AND INFORMAL RESERVES LIKE STREAM BUFFERS AND ROCKY OUTCROPS, FAUNA HABITAT AREAS AND EXPERIMENTAL CONTROLS.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT BEING SELECTED FOR THE RESEARCH IS THAT IT IS A HIGH RAINFALL ZONE AND IS

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HIGHER RAINFALL AREAS OF OTHER METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY CATCHMENTS.

PAST RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES THAT THERE WILL NOT BE ANY STREAM SALINITY ISSUES DUE TO THIS PROJECT.

THE FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES ARE EXPECTED TO BE GREENHOUSE NEUTRAL, AS THERE WILL BE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE RELEASE OF CARBON FROM TREES THAT ARE THINNED AND THE STORING OF CARBON IN THE REMAINING TREES, WHICH WILL GROW FASTER.

TREE HOLLOWES ARE AN IMPORTANT HABITAT FOR A RANGE OF FAUNA.

AS SUCH, HABITAT TREES WILL BE RETAINED, CONSISTENT WITH THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN AND THE THINNING WILL ALLOW PROSPECTIVE ONES TO GROW FASTER.

THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT IS A WELL UNDERSTOOD AREA AND THIS EXISTING KNOWLEDGE WILL ENHANCE THE VALUE OF FURTHER RESEARCH.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RAINFALL AND STREAM GAUGING STATIONS IN OR NEAR THE CATCHMENT AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON SOIL, LANDFORMS AND BIODIVERSITY.

ALSO, THERE IS RESEARCH DATA ON WATER AND FOREST MANAGEMENT.

THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR FORESTS IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE.

THE WATER CORPORATION HAS UNDERTAKEN STUDIES IN CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONFIRM THAT CURRENT BEST PRACTICE FOREST MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES COULD BE SUCCESSFULLY APPLIED TO THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT.

ONGOING STUDY WILL BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROJECT AND THE WATER CORPORATION WILL FUND RESEARCH, COLLECTION OF BASELINE DATA AND MONITORING BY INDEPENDENT INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS TO PROVIDE UNBIASED SCRUTINY OF RESULTS.

THE REVIEW ORGANISATIONS WILL INCLUDE THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION, THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY AND CONSULTANTS.

ALSO, A TECHNICAL REFERENCE GROUP FORMED WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM A NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS TO DEVELOP THE PROJECT WILL CONTINUE TO REVIEW THE ANNUAL WORKS AND RESEARCH PROGRAM.

THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE WATER CORPORATION BELIEVE THAT THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT ENVIRONMENT AND WATER MANAGEMENT PROJECT IS ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND, SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE.

IT WILL ADD A FURTHER DIMENSION TO THE STATE WATER STRATEGY'S 'SECURITY THROUGH DIVERSITY' APPROACH TO OUR DRYING CLIMATE AND WILL HELP THE ENVIRONMENT.

THE GALLOP GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO KEEPING THE WATER FLOWING AS OUR CLIMATE BECOMES HOTTER AND DRIER, AS THE EXPERTS PREDICT.

FORESTS AND WATER ARE PART OF THE SAME SYSTEM AND ARE MUTUALLY RELIANT; THEREFORE WE BELIEVE IT MAKES SENSE TO MANAGE THEM TOGETHER.

WHILE WE APPROACH THIS RESEARCH PROJECT WITH CONFIDENCE, WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN UNKNOWNNS.

HOWEVER, THERE IS A SOUND UNDERSTANDING ON WHICH TO BASE STRATEGIES TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF ANY POTENTIAL IMPACTS.

THIS IS A RESEARCH PROJECT.

AS SUCH, IT IS ADAPTIVE AND IT CAN CHANGE IF REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WUNGONG CATCHMENT.

WE EXPECT AND INVITE CLOSE PUBLIC SCRUTINY OF THIS PROJECT BY THE PUBLIC, SCIENTISTS AND THE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY - AND THIS STARTS TODAY.

BEFORE ANY WORK BEGINS THERE WILL BE A SIX-WEEK PERIOD OF PUBLIC REVIEW THAT WILL END ON 8 JUNE 2005.

THE WATER CORPORATION HAS PRESENTED THIS PROJECT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY.

FURTHER COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE OUTPUT OF THE PUBLIC REVIEW WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE EPA TO FACILITATE ADVICE TO THE MINISTER.

THERE ALSO WILL BE PUBLIC INFORMATION DAYS HELD IN THE VARIOUS LOCAL AUTHORITIES - THE CITY OF ARMADALE AND THE SHIRE OF SERPENTINE-JARRAHDALE, AS WELL AS A PUBLIC LECTURE AT THE STATE LIBRARY IN PERTH.

IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE PUBLIC REVIEW BEING LAUNCHED TODAY WILL BE THE PRECURSOR TO THE

START OF THE PROJECT PROPER IN THE SPRING OF THIS YEAR.

COMMENT AND INFORMATION GAINED FROM THE PUBLIC REVIEW WILL BE USED TO MODIFY AND IMPROVE THE EXPECTED PROJECT OUTCOMES.

THIS IS AN EXCITING PROJECT WITH GREAT POTENTIAL AND I ENCOURAGE AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO BE INVOLVED AND TO HAVE THEIR SAY.

THANK YOU.
