



South West Yarragadee Position Statement

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) released the Water Corporation's proposal to draw 45 Gigalitres of groundwater from the South West Yarragadee Aquifer on Monday 27 February. The Environmental Review and Management Program detailed the corporation's proposal for a borefield and water treatment plant near the town of Jarrahwood, located on the Blackwood Plateau between Busselton and Nannup. A 110-kilometre buried pipeline would connect the water treatment plant to the existing water supply scheme near Harvey.

The Department of Water has been conducting a parallel licence assessment during the past year including undertaking separate studies to determine ecological and social water requirements and the economic value of water to the various regional users. The Department will review the management program as part of its licence assessment.

The Department supports orderly State development, with due regard to the triple bottom line in all assessments. The Department's assessment is based on Schedule 1 Clause 7(2) of the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act (1914)*. In particular, the assessment must consider whether the development is in the public interest, will be ecologically sustainable and environmentally acceptable, whether it will impact on other current and future water needs, and whether it will have a detrimental effect on people. The Department must also ensure the proposal is consistent with land use planning, other government agency requirements and policies, and any inter-governmental agreement or arrangement.

The licence assessment process for the South West Yarragadee Aquifer is likely to be completed by mid-year with the Department providing advice to the Government in late 2006. The Government, through the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Water, will then make a decision on the basis of advice from the Department and the EPA. The Minister for Water Resources, John Kobelke, would be responsible for issuing the licence.

The Department is also currently developing a water resource management plan for the South West Region. This plan is independent of the decision on the Water Corporation's proposal to access the South West Yarragadee Aquifer as it will cover all the groundwater resources in the South West Region. Development of the plan will include consultation with the community and key stakeholders such as the Whicher Water Resource Management Committee and regional utilities.

Groundwater resources are also a major component of the State Water Plan that is currently being developed by the Department in conjunction with the Office of Water Strategy and the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The State Water Plan will feature regional plans including a South West Water Plan.

The EPA's 12-week public review period starts on Monday 27 February and will conclude on Monday 22 May. The community is encouraged to express their views on the corporation's proposal by making a submission to the EPA.

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