



The KIC has warned a water shortage is looming for WA's premier industrial area. Picture: Kwinana Industries Council

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Water shortage looming for Kwinana Industrial Area, warns KIC

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A crisis is looming for WA's premier industrial area with water supplies drying up, the Kwinana Industries Council warns.

KIC director Chris Oughton claims the State Government has failed to grasp the urgency of the situation.

"The crunch time is coming and coming sooner than we think," he said.

"Inaction or inattention to this looming crisis sits fairly and squarely with the government departments."

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has deemed the current level of groundwater abstraction in the area as unsustainable due to a drying climate. It claims groundwater resources are “fully or over-allocated”.

The department, which is working on a new groundwater allocation plan for the area, has warned it is likely to refuse applications for more water, including increases to existing licences. This could thwart businesses looking to expand.

Mr Oughton said new sources of process water were needed to meet existing and future needs. Water demand by industry is expected to increase from 28.5 gigalitres a year to between 36GL and 52GL/year by 2031.

“The availability of process water suitable for industry is a serious concern and it is currently a constraint on the development of new industries . . . if they can’t get (water here) they’ll go somewhere else, maybe offshore.

“The industrial area is 6000ha and with only 2000 developed. When these industries come, where is their water going to come from?”

Mr Oughton said a solution — managed aquifer recharge (MAR) — had been identified by KIC as far back as 2008. He said the Government had been leading a study into the viability of MAR for four years. Time was now running out.

MAR involves treating wastewater and injecting it back into the aquifer.

“MAR is viable and the science says so,” he said, although there was a “stumbling block” over who would pay for recharging the aquifer.

“It is not existing industry that should be paying for this because it has already got its allocation,” he said.

Conservation Council WA boss Piers Verstegen said industry should start paying for its water.

“The current licence holders have had it good for years,” he said. “Now that the aquifer is over-allocated, the cost of maintaining and recharging the aquifer they are drawing from should be borne by all large water users.

“This could be done through a modest levy payable by all water users in the Kwinana strip.”