

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**Question on notice**

14 AUG 2012

**Tuesday, 19 June 2012**

5738. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment.

I refer to the development of multiple water bores in the Exmouth region and town site. This is in spite of the North West Cape's World Heritage values due to its unique karst system, host to protected stygofauna.

I also draw your attention to the statement in Appendix 3: Guidance for water management to protect ecological values of the Cape Range Province of the Environmental Protection of Cape Range Province, Position Statement No. 1, December 1999 --

To manage water abstraction to ensure that karst formations and wetlands are protected, all bores in the area should be licensed and abstraction from all bores should be coordinated through a single provider with day to day management responsibility. As the major abstractor in the area, an on-site presence and good monitoring systems, the Water Corporation should be the current focus for this coordinated management.

and I ask --

- (1) Were there amendments in legislation or regulation in 2011 to allow for residential water bores without application or licence within the Exmouth town site or in the region?
- (2) If yes to (1), will the Minister provide a copy of the changes in legislation or regulation that allow for residential water bores without application or licence?
- (3) If no to (1), what is the current process that applies to the people who wish to construct water bores within the Exmouth town site or in the region?
- (4) Given that there has been an influx of private residential water bores being drilled in Exmouth Township in recent months, does the Department of Environment and Conservation or the Minister have any concerns about the impact of water extraction on the regional-local aquifer and stygofauna?
- (5) What are the risks that over-extraction will lead to detrimental impacts on the protected subterranean stygofauna?
- (6) What are the risks that over-extraction will allow for the ingress of sea water into the aquifer?
- (7) What monitoring of the extraction rates, impacts and ingress of saline water is being carried out to ensure the objectives of the Environmental Protection of Cape

Range Province, Position Statement No. 1, December 1999 are being met?

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**Answer**

(1)-(3) Yes, see the Government Gazette of 8 July 2011 No. 132, page 2901.

(4)-(6) Abstraction of groundwater could result in changes to water quality due to saltwater intrusion by upconing, and this may have the potential to impact on stygofauna.

Over-extraction of freshwater can lead to the inland migration of the saltwater interface, resulting in the loss or modification of habitat for subterranean species.

There is always some risk of abstraction increasing salinity in the aquifer and this has not changed with exempting the need to license domestic bores. The Department of Water advises that domestic bore use in comparison to the overall use of the resource represents a minimal risk. Largely the ingress of sea water into the aquifer depends on where a bore is located, how much is abstracted and how much the aquifer was recharged by rainfall during the previous year.

(7) The Department of Water monitors the potential impacts and ingress of saline water via the administration of a groundwater licence held by the Water Corporation that requires the monitoring of water levels and water quality including salinity.

