

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Question on notice

16 OCT 2012

Tuesday, 11 September 2012

5951. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment.

I refer to the dying eucalyptus trees in the Withnell Bay creek-line adjacent to the Woodside Pluto and the North West Shelf facilities, and I ask --

- (1) Have Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) staff visited the site?
- (2) If yes to (1), on what date?
- (3) What conclusions has DEC come to in respect of the dying and stressed vegetation?
- (4) If no conclusion has been reached, why not?
- (5) Has an investigation been implemented in respect of the dying and stressed vegetation?
- (6) If yes to (5), when was it commenced?
- (7) If no to (5), why not?
- (8) If yes to (5), when is it expected that the investigation will be concluded?
- (9) Has the department met with representatives of Woodside Energy, Pluto or North West Shelf Joint Venture in respect of the dying and stressed vegetation?
- (10) If yes to (9), on what date did the meeting take place?
- (11) If yes to (9), did the DEC staff believe the problem might have emanated from the Woodside Pluto or North West Shelf Joint Venture sites?
- (12) If yes to (9) and no to (11), why did the DEC staff meet with staff from Woodside, Pluto or the North West Shelf Joint Venture?
- (13) If yes to (9) and yes to (11), why did the DEC staff consider that the problem might have emanated from the Woodside, Pluto or North West Shelf Joint Venture sites?
- (14) Have any other creek-lines in the area been affected in the same way?
- (15) If no to (14), what topical impact on the Withnell Bay creek-line is considered to have occurred?
- (16) What action has or will DEC take to rectify the problems of the dying and stressed vegetation?

Answer

- (1) Yes
- (2) 23 August 2012.
- (3)-(4) The affected eucalyptus trees, *Eucalyptus victrix*, appear to have been temporarily stressed. During the site visit notable regrowth was evident on the trees and it was apparent that the trees are in recovery. The cause of the localised decline in vegetation health has not been scientifically determined, although it is presumed that natural causes were most likely in this instance.
- (5) At the time of the site visit the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) requested that Woodside conduct photographic monitoring of the affected trees to monitor their regrowth. Woodside had also engaged an independent botanist for specialist advice and they have confirmed that there appears to be no link between their operations and the affected trees. Groundwater flow paths run from the area of affected trees downstream into the industrial premises. Groundwater monitoring onsite at the Karratha Gas Plant shows no evidence of contaminants.
- (6) The vegetation monitoring commenced following the site visit with photographs from Woodside taken on 6 September 2012 indicating significant regrowth of the trees.
- (7) Not applicable
- (8) As there is no evidence to suggest that Woodside's operations have impacted on the vegetation, no further investigation is proposed.
- (9)-(10) Yes, DEC attended the site on 23 August 2012 with representatives from Woodside who reported the affected trees to DEC in the first instance.
- (11) See the answer to (8).
- (12) DEC attended the site with Woodside representatives as they reported the decline in vegetation health to DEC.
- (13) Not applicable
- (14) DEC is not aware of other localised vegetation declines in the area.
- (15) DEC considers the vegetation decline to be the result of an unknown natural cause.
- (16) DEC believes that the temporary vegetation stress was the result of an unknown natural cause and that the trees will recover.

