

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question on notice

- 3 DEC 2013

Tuesday, 19 November 2013

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

I refer to question without notice No. 411, asked on 13 August 2013, about the mercury contamination at mining tenements M15/497 and M15/498, and I ask:

- (a) has the Department of Environment Regulation started investigating this suspected contaminated site, as required;
- (b) if yes to (a), can the Minister table the findings;
- (c) if no to (a), why not;
- (d) who is the current holder of these mining tenements;
- (e) is the current holder of these mining tenements responsible for the rehabilitation of the site, including decontaminating the soil;
- (f) if no to (e), who is responsible; and
- (g) what actions has the holder of the tenements or the responsible person as defined in (f) done to rehabilitate and decontaminate the site?

Answer

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response.

- (a) The Department of Environment Regulation (DER) does not undertake independent investigations of contaminated sites. Under the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*, DER will work with responsible parties to ensure that appropriate investigations and remediation of contaminated sites occurs.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) DER classified the impacted portion of mining tenements M15/497 and M15/498 (the site) known as the former Paris Gold Mine as 'possibly contaminated - investigation required' under the Contaminated Sites Act on 4 April 2012.

DER wrote to the leaseholder, St. Ives Gold Mining Company (SIGM) on 17 May 2013 advising that action was required in relation to the investigation of contamination at the site, with a deadline for the provision of information relating to assessment at the site of 28 June 2013.

On 3 July 2013, DER received a letter from SIGM dated 28 June 2013 which provided information regarding several previous contamination investigations undertaken in 2005 and 2007. SIGM also advised that it was in the process of preparing a Mine Closure Plan (MCP) which encompassed the assessment and management of contamination along with rehabilitation at the site.

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DER is unaware at this time if the MCP has been submitted to, or approved by, the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP).

DER will continue to correspond with stakeholders, including SIGM and DMP, to ensure that appropriate management of contamination at the site occurs.

- (d) The current leaseholder is the St Ives Gold Mining Company Pty Ltd.
- (e) Rehabilitation of mine sites falls under the jurisdiction of DMP, therefore I recommend that this question be referred to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. However, the Contaminated Sites Act provides a hierarchy of responsibility for remediation of contamination, where some responsibility may be portioned to all identifiable former leaseholders. Requests for determination of responsibility for remediation can be made to the Contaminated Sites Committee, which is independent of DER.
- (f) See response to (e) above.
- (g) I recommend that this part of the question be referred to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum.

DER is unaware of any decontamination activity being conducted at the site to date. However, it is understood that SIGM is preparing a MCP that would be expected to address contamination issues.