

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

**Tuesday, 11 March 2014**

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

In North America there is considerable debate as to whether horizontal shale gas drilling has contributed to methane contamination of groundwater. It has not been possible to conclusively resolve this debate as no pre-fracking baseline methane levels were taken. In the United Kingdom the British Geological Survey (BGS) has collected baseline methane levels in all proposed shale gas drilling areas and this information is posted on the BGS website

[http://www.bgs.ac.uk/research/groundwater/quality/methane\\_baseline\\_initial\\_results.html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/research/groundwater/quality/methane_baseline_initial_results.html).

In relation to baseline methane data collection in Western Australia, I ask:

- (a) does the Department of Mines or the Environmental Protection Authority intend to facilitate baseline methane data collection in proposed shale or coal seam gas areas such as the North Perth Basin and Canning Basin;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) if yes to (a), when will or did baseline data collection commence;
- (d) if yes to (a), will that data become publicly available;
- (e) if no to (d), why not;
- (f) have the companies proposing to use hydraulic fracturing been asked to collect baseline methane groundwater level data prior to commencement of work;
- (g) if yes to (f), will or is that data being made available to the Government;
- (h) if yes to (f), will or is that data being made available to the public;
- (i) if yes to (f), will the Minister provide a list of those companies currently conducting baseline methane groundwater levels;
- (j) if no to (i), why not;
- (k) are companies proposing hydraulic fracturing obliged to conduct follow up resultant baseline levels of methane in groundwater post hydraulic fracturing; and
- (l) if yes to (k), and no to (a) or (f), of what value will that data be?

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**Answer**

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response:

- (a)-(l) The Environmental Protection Act 1986 provides for referral of environmentally significant proposals to the Environmental Protection Authority. Should a proposal be referred, and if it is the decision of the Environmental Protection Authority to assess that proposal, then the Environmental Protection Authority will determine the form, content and timing of any assessment.

In doing so, the Environmental Protection Authority will determine what information needs to be provided by the proponent to determine the likely effect of the proposal on the environment, including baseline water quality as appropriate. The Environmental Protection Authority will also seek the advice of other departments.

