

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question on notice

Tuesday, 6 May 2014

1118. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment.

I refer to the recent upsurge of interest in the future of one of Western Australia's most outstanding biodiversity assets, the Helena and Aurora Range in the Yilgarn region, and I ask:

(a) did the Minister recently visit the Helena and Aurora Range in company with the Minister for Mines and various departmental advisers:

(i) if yes to (a), what was the purpose of the visit;

(b) did the Minister discuss the proposal for the range to be declared a National Park:

(i) if yes to (b), what was the outcome of the discussion and what conclusions were drawn;

(c) did the Minister discuss the proposed mining of parts of the range:

(i) if yes to (c), what was the outcome of the discussion and what conclusions were drawn;

(d) is the Minister aware of recommendations dating back over 30 years for the range to be fully protected, including recommendations by the then Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), now the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW) and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA);

(e) did the Minister discuss the recently enunciated EPA position that mining of the range within the Helena and Aurora Range Conservation Park was unlikely to be acceptable:

(i) if yes to (e), what was the outcome of the discussion and what conclusions were drawn;

(f) did the Minister discuss recent decisions by the Government to protect other significant parts of Western Australia from mining, namely Margaret River in the South West and Horizontal Waterfalls in the Kimberley, and how the same approach could be applied in the case of the Helena and Aurora Range:

(i) if no to (f), why not;

(g) has the Minister met with representatives from Polaris Metals Limited since assuming the role of Minister for the Environment:

(i) if yes to (g), was the Helena and Aurora Range discussed and, if so, what was the outcome of discussions;

(h) has the Minister met with representatives of Mineral Resources Limited since assuming the role of Minister for the Environment:

(i) if yes to (h), was the Helena and Aurora Range discussed and, if so, what was the outcome of discussions; and

(i) has the Minister met with any of the groups proposing the Helena and Aurora Range become a National Park to discuss the proposal:

(i) if no to (i), why not; and

(ii) if yes to (i), what was the outcome of discussions?

Answer

- (a) Yes
 - (i) The Minister for Environment visited the area to gain a first-hand understanding of the local environment and conservation and mining arrangements in the Mount Manning area.
- (b) Yes
 - (i) Specific outcomes were not discussed or conclusions drawn.
- (c) Yes
 - (i) Specific outcomes were not discussed or conclusions drawn.
- (d) Yes
- (e) No
 - (i) Not applicable
- (f) No
 - (i) The decisions regarding mining in the Margaret River and Horizontal Falls area were not the focus of the visit.
- (g) Yes, the Minister for Environment has met with representatives of Polaris Limited.
 - (i) Yes. The Minister advised that his consideration of possible environmental approval of proposals affecting the Helena-Aurora Range will occur following receipt of the Environmental Protection Authority's report and recommendations regarding those proposals.
- (h) Yes, the Minister for Environment has met with representatives of Mineral Resources Limited.
 - (i) Yes. The Minister advised that his consideration of possible environmental approval of proposals affecting the Helena-Aurora Range will occur following receipt of the Environmental Protection Authority's report and recommendation regarding those proposals.
- (i) Yes, the Minister for Environment has met with representatives of the Wildflower Society of Western Australia.
 - (i) Not applicable
 - (ii) The Minister noted the views of the Wildflower Society.

