

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question on notice

Tuesday, 9 September 2014

1506. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum.

Noting the high level of public interest and concern in relation to fracking in Western Australia and the various claims being made as to its safety or otherwise, I ask:

(a) is the Minister aware of repeated claims by the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) and Western Australian industry groups that there have been over 700 fracking operations in the State:

(i) is the Minister able to verify that this information is correct;

(b) is the Minister aware of a DMP document entitled *WA Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation - Well List (alphabetical order)*, which claims to list all fracking operations in Western Australia;

(c) including those referenced in the footnotes of this document, will the Minister please confirm how many fracking operations have been conducted in Western Australia:

(i) of these, which operations involved the use of pressures exceeding 10,000 pounds per square inch;

(ii) which operations included the use of a mix of chemicals to reduce friction and surface tension, kill bacteria, remove scale and inhibit corrosion; and

(iii) which operations involved the use of horizontal drilling and horizontal fracking;

(d) does the DMP have a database of all wells that have been fracked in Western Australia:

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

(e) does the DMP have records of how much water was used in all fracking operations in Western Australia:

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

(f) with regards to the historical fracks for oil and gas, were chemicals used with the water:

(i) if yes to (f), what were these chemicals;

(g) with regard to the historical fracks for oil and gas, were any other materials, such as sand, used as proppants;

(h) how many of the wells that have been fracked in Western Australia have been followed up with compliance visits;

(i) how many of the wells that have been fracked in Western Australia had the

surrounding groundwater monitored for pollution;

(j) how many wells have been fracked in Western Australia using the modern fracking methods of extremely high pressure pumping, patented chemical cocktails and proppants; and

(k) will the Minister ensure that DMP does not further repeat the misleading claim that there have been over 700 fracks in Western Australia:

(i) if no to (k), why not?

Answer

The Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) advises:

(a) Yes

(i) Yes

(b) Yes

(c) Yes, DMP records currently indicate 781 operations including 734 on Barrow Island and 47 others. Note that multiple fracking operations can occur on a single well. The number of fracking operations on Barrow Island arose out of a study undertaken by the Barrow Island joint venture partners.

(i) DMP records show that two fracture stimulations exceeded 10 000psi — Whicher Range 1 and Whicher Range 4.

(ii) This combination of chemicals was used in Yulleroo 2 and Arrowsmith 2.

(iii) None

(d) No

(i) The WAPIMS database is being updated with records dating back 60 years and a more fulsome list of wells will be generated after the paper records have been scanned and entered into the system. Over the last 60 years, reporting requirements in Western Australia have evolved to the transparent standards now applied. The date of a well operation will therefore determine the amount of information provided to the Department.

(e) Yes, but see answer to (d).

(i) Not applicable

(f) Yes

(i) Depending on the purpose of the fracture stimulation, different chemicals could be used, especially over the 60 years since the first fracture operation was done. This information may be contained in well reports via WAPIMS.

- (g) Depending on the purpose of the fracture stimulation other materials such as sand may, or may not have been used. This information may be contained in well reports via WAPIMS.
- (h) In recent years all wells were followed up with compliance visits. The records are incomplete regarding compliance visits for historical well activities.
- (i) Production fields require licensing under Schedule 1 of the Environmental Protection Regulations 1987 and this can require groundwater monitoring, the results of which would be submitted to the Department of Environment Regulation. For exploration wells, groundwater monitoring is a feature of the more recent reforms e.g. Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources (Environment) Regulations 2012.
- (j) DMP records indicate that 11 wells have used modern fracture technology. Since the implementation of the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources (Environment) Regulations 2012, patented chemicals cannot be approved for use without full public disclosure.
- (k) No
- (i) DMP will continue to make factual statements in the public domain.

