

C 1474

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE
(Of which some notice has been given)**

Tuesday, 2 December 2014

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

I refer to the flooding of the Koolan Island mine caused by the sea wall slump on Tuesday, 25 November 2014 and ask:

1. Will the Minister provide a Gibson Iron and departmental time line for all aspects of the incident, response and management plans of this incident?
2. What is being done to mitigate the flow of suspended material and pollutants deposition on the nearby reefs?
3. What machinery and fuel or oil storage was in the pit at the time of the collapse?
4. Will there be an independent inquiry into the collapse?
5. If no to 4.) why not?
6. Is there a bond still held for this mine and what is it?

I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

The Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) advises:

1. In accordance with the DMP's mandate as a robust environmental regulator, the department responded quickly and professionally to the incident on Koolan Island. The principle aspects of the timeline relating to the incident are:
 - 25 November: DMP was advised by Gibson Iron of uncontrolled ingress of seawater into the main pit at Koolan Island.
 - 26 November: DMP was advised by Gibson Iron that the pit had flooded and was connected to the marine environment.
 - 26 November: A teleconference of representatives of DMP, Department of Transport, Department of Environment Regulation and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority was held to coordinate the government agency responses to the incident.

27 November: Senior officers from DMP and Gibson Iron met and discussed the incident, and the company's response to the incident.

28 November: An environmental inspector and safety inspector from DMP attended the site with senior officers from Gibson Iron.

2. The inspection undertaken by DMP on 28 November identified that there was no observable sediment plume escaping from the pit into the marine environment, however DMP considers that there is a risk of sediment being exported to the marine environment during tidal movements. The company has engaged third-party experts to undertake water quality assessments of the surrounding marine environment to determine if there has been any impact on the external environment. The outcome of this assessment will inform any action required by the company to control sediment dispersion.
3. Initial assessment by DMP has identified that two diesel-powered pumps with fuel tanks were within the pit at the time of the flooding. All other mobile mining equipment had previously been removed from the pit by the company.
4. No
5. DMP is coordinating with other state regulators on the response to the incident and the investigation into the cause of the incident.
6. Since the commencement of the Mining Rehabilitation Fund last year, the Western Australian Government now has a perpetual fund available to undertake rehabilitation on mine sites if the company is unable to do so. There is more than \$32 million in the Mining Rehabilitation Fund.

The company has responded promptly to the incident in undertaking spill response and monitoring of the marine environment, and is cooperating with DMP and the other state regulators.

There is a \$2.7 million unconditional performance bond held for the tenement which contains the pit.

