

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question On Notice

Tuesday, 22 March 2016

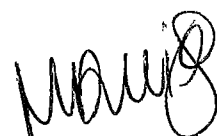
3907. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Water

I refer to recent statements made by the Minister in Parliament on 16 March 2016 regarding the identification of 100 gigalitres of sustainable, high-quality groundwater in the West Canning Basin, and ask:

- (a) what proportion of the 10,000 square kilometre (sq km) footprint referred to by the Minister in relation to the West Canning Basin underlies the Fitzroy River catchment;
- (b) how many aquifers are included in this 10,000 sq km footprint and what are their names;
- (c) how many, and which, of these aquifers are replenished by surface water inflows;
- (d) how many, and which, of these aquifers discharge water into rivers, streams, pools and wetlands during the dry season;
- (e) when the Minister stated that, "Up to this point, we have proven up a sustainable 100 gigalitres of resource a year" from this Basin, does the Minister mean that this water is now available for allocation to industry or other users;
- (f) what assessment methodology, including environmental and cultural impact assessment, was used to arrive at the figure of 100 gigalitres of sustainable water;
- (g) was any independent advice or input sought in arriving at this figure;
- (h) have the Traditional Owners of the lands covering the West Canning Basin been advised of this potential new water resource and its allocation;
- (i) will there be any open and transparent process involving the public, Traditional Owners and independent experts before any allocations of this water are made;
- (j) if no to (i), why not;
- (k) is the Minister aware of recent reports from the Bureau of Meteorology and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation highlighting the impacts of climate change on northern Australia, including the Kimberley-West Canning, which conclude that it is likely there will be higher temperatures, more extreme weather events (for example, heatwaves, floods), greater variability in rainfall and increased evaporation;
- (l) has this climate change information been used in arriving at the 100 gigalitres of sustainable water figure;
- (m) if yes to (l), how has it been incorporated;
- (n) if no to (l), why not;
- (o) is the Minister aware of the severe drought currently affecting large parts of the Fitzroy River/West Canning area;
- (p) has this drought and the potential for such droughts to be more common in the future been incorporated into the calculation of the 100 gigalitres of sustainable water;
- (q) if yes to (p), in what way; and
- (r) if no to (p), why not?

Answer

- (a) None
- (b) Two – the shallow Broome aquifer and the deeper, artesian Wallal aquifer



- (c) None
- (d) Two – the Broome and Wallal aquifers
- (e) No
- (f) The current groundwater allocation limit of 50 gigalitres per year was determined following Department of Water and private hydrogeological investigations, including the work undertaken in preparation of the *Pilbara Groundwater Allocation Plan 2013*, using flow data from bore completions (both Government and private) prior to 2012, and supported by water chemistry data. Bores drilled since 2012 have been incorporated into the ongoing analysis and the modelling for the current study.
- (g) No
- (h) Yes
- (i) Yes
- (j) Not applicable
- (k) Yes
- (l) No decision has been made to increase the allocation limit for the Wallal aquifer in the West Canning Basin. However, climate information, seasonal variation and drought risk will be assessed through the aquifer modelling and review of the allocation limit.
- (m) Not applicable.
- (n) Not applicable
- (o) Yes
- (p) No decision has been made to increase the allocation limit for the Wallal aquifer in the West Canning Basin. However, climate information, seasonal variation and drought risk will be assessed through the aquifer modelling and review of the allocation limit.
- (q) Not applicable
- (r) Not applicable