

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**Question On Notice**

**Wednesday, 16 August 2017**

**144. Hon Robbin Chapple to the Minister for Regional Development representing the Minister for Water**

(1) I refer to Mowanjum and the previous State Government's Water for Food project, and ask:

- (a) is the Minister satisfied that long term water pumping by the existing pumps to irrigate 38 hectares will not cause a reduction in groundwater depth and water quality;
- (b) if yes to (a), why;
- (c) if no to (a), why not;
- (d) does the Department of Water know how much water can be drawn in this area without negatively impacting groundwater quantity and quality;
- (e) if yes to (d), how;
- (f) if no to (d), why not;
- (g) is there any possibility that the nearby saltwater interface could move inland due to pumping groundwater in the Mowanjum area;
- (h) if yes to (g), how will this be prevented;
- (i) if no to (g), how is this known;
- (j) is the Minister aware that prior to the development, the previous Government did not undertake hydrological studies, a cost benefit analysis nor soil studies for this project; and
- (k) what is the current status of the project?

(2) How many local residents of the Mowanjum community have:

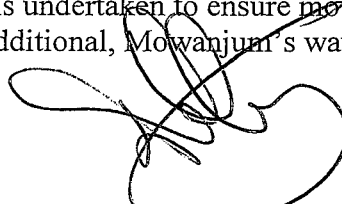
- (a) undertaken training directly linked to the project to date;
- (b) gained direct employment as a result of the project to date; and
- (c) have current employment as a direct result of the project?

(3) What is the value of funds expended to date on the project and how have these funds been spent?

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**Answer**

- (1) (a) A comprehensive hydrogeological assessment was carried out prior to grant of the water licence.  
 (b) As above  
 (c) Not applicable  
 (d) Yes  
 (e) Based on the hydrogeological assessment which has been undertaken, the current groundwater draw will not negatively impact groundwater quality or quantity. Any additional draw which could impact groundwater quality or quantity will be assessed by the Department through its review of the Derby groundwater allocation plan and applications to take groundwater in the plan area.  
 (f) Not applicable  
 (g) Monitoring of the saltwater interface is undertaken to ensure movement is detected early and detrimental impacts avoided. Additional, Mowanjum's water licence includes



conditions on the rate and timing of groundwater pumping to assist with management of the saltwater interface.

(h) Through the assessment and decision-making on groundwater licence applications, and monitoring, management and reporting in accordance with licence conditions.

(i) Not applicable

(j) Hydrological studies and soils tests were undertaken prior to development of the project. A formal cost-benefit analysis was not undertaken for the Mowanjum irrigation trial.

(k) The trial has commenced and data is being collected.

(2) (a) 15

(b) 17

(c) 2

(3) \$3.5 million. Expenditure to date includes the establishment of a production bore field and the irrigation trial site (including land preparation, establishment and commissioning of the centre pivot irrigation system), project management, the employment of two trainees and agronomic and irrigation advisory services.