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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question Without Notice

Tuesday, 19 May 2020

C483. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Environment

I refer to the Port Hedland dust programme, established under the Department of Water & Environmental Regulation, and to the Media Statement:

<https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/03/New-border-controls-to-help-protect-Western-Australia.aspx>, and I ask:

1. Does the Minister agree with the Premier that all industrial operations at the port of Port Hedland are “essential services”?
2. Of those operations referred to in (1.), which are fitted with LiDAR sensors to monitor dust pollution?
3. Given that the source of the dust is still unknown, does the Minister agree that mandating LiDAR sensors for all operations in the area would definitively locate the source of the pollution?
4. Given that the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) are drafting a document to restrict residences in the town, why are operations allowed to commence or continue at Port Hedland with no dust-monitoring requirement?
5. Should efforts to mitigate the dust pollution problem fail, does the Minister intend to recommend the relocation of residents, and/or industries?

Answer

1. The mining industry has been a vital part of insulating our State from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was deemed an essential service to safeguard jobs and the economic prosperity of the State.

2. I have been advised that the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) is not aware of any LiDAR equipment operating in Port Hedland at this time.

3–5. DWER regulates dust emissions from port operations under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. I am advised that while LiDAR can be useful in identify sources and pathways of dust in Port Hedland, it does have some limitations and is only one of a number of means of identifying emission sources.

All licensed port operations in Port Hedland are required to operate a network of air quality monitors around the perimeter of their premises to monitor and respond to elevated dust levels. Licensees are also subject to a range of other dust monitoring and mitigation requirements as part of licence conditions.

DWER is continuing to implement the Government endorsed recommendations of the Port Hedland Dust Management Taskforce. This includes taking control of the Port Hedland ambient air quality monitoring network and developing and implementing dust management guidelines for bulk handling port premises.



Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
**MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT;
DISABILITY SERVICES; ELECTORAL AFFAIRS**