

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question Without Notice

Tuesday, 23 June 2020

C673. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Environment

I refer to the ABC Goldfield's article "Native title claimants sound alarm over potential destruction of more Aboriginal sites in WA", available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-13/existence-of-aboriginal-heritage-sites-denied-in-mining-dispute/12348476>, and to the EPA approval of works at this site referenced by that article, and I ask;

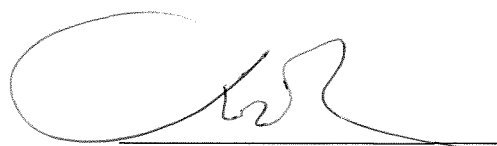
1. Can the Minister confirm that EPA assessments are conducted on the basis of "reasonable doubt"?
2. Is the Minister, and the EPA, aware that the heritage values at the site are contested?
3. Can the Minister explain why EPA approval was granted despite this contestation, and associated doubt in the project's effects on Indigenous heritage?
4. Given Mr Shackleton, Australian Potash chief executive, said "there have not been any sites identified by legitimate knowledge holders", can the Minister please explain Mr Shackleton's credentials related to discerning the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge-holders?

Answer

1-3 The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) undertakes environmental impact assessment in accordance with requirements of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). I am advised that the EPA is currently assessing the Lake Wells Potash Project by Australian Potash Limited. The EPA's assessment includes consideration of potential impacts on Lake Wells and its social surrounds.

I am also advised that in May 2020 the EPA consented to the proponent's application to undertake minor and preliminary works under the EP Act. These works, which involve the clearing of up to 32 hectares for the construction and operation of access tracks, borrow areas and an accommodation camp, still require relevant approvals from other decision making authorities.

4. I am not in a position to comment on Mr Shackleton's credentials.



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