

MT PERCY GOLD MINE, KALGOORLIE - SALINE WATER SPILL

4973. Hon Giz Watson to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to the gold mine operated by Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines (KCGM) on behalf of the owners Newmont Mining and Barrick Gold and a saline water spill on or about 18 June 2006 at the Mount Percy operation, and I ask -

- (1) Is it correct that the saline water spill went outside of the bunding and travelled along a road?
- (2) If no to (2), why not?
- (3) Can the Minister state how far in metres did the saline water spill travel from the pipeline bunding and the amount of area in square metres that the saline water spill impacted upon?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?
- (5) Did this saline water spill flow onto an Aboriginal reserve in the Mt Percy area?
- (6) If yes to (5), how was this allowed to occur?
- (7) If no to (5), has a saline water spill occurred onto an Aboriginal reserve in the Mt Percy area over the last 14 months?
- (8) Did KCGM breach section 50 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* by discharging waste water which was likely to cause pollution?
- (9) If no to (8), why not?
- (10) Will KCGM be prosecuted for breaching any section of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* in causing the saline water spill at the Mount Percy operation?
- (11) If no to (11), why not?
- (12) Can the Minister state what extra controls are now in place for the KCGM operations to prevent ongoing saline water spills outside of the pipeline bunding so that no further breaches of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* will occur?
- (13) If no to (12), why not?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1) Yes. It is important to note that the road forms part of the bund; however, the spill was not contained within the road and bund structures.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) The distance travelled outside the bund varied. It is estimated that 1000 square metres of land outside the bunding was affected.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) No.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) Yes. A saline water spill on 22 May 2007 flowed onto an Aboriginal reserve.
- (8) No.
- (9) A Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Inspector examined the 18 June 2006 spill on 21 June 2006 and considered that:
 - native vegetation was unlikely to be impacted.
 - the vegetation in the area was rehabilitation and unlikely to be considered native vegetation as it was vegetation still under mining area bond arrangements.
 - given the saline constituents of the pipeline are not on Schedule 1 of the Environmental Protection (Unauthorised Discharge) Regulations 2004 a breach had not occurred.
- (10) No. See (8) and (9).
- (11) See (9). The pipeline in question is not a prescribed activity under the Environmental Protection Act 1986 or its various regulations.

- (12) Normal pipeline management controls and earthworks are in place. DEC will continue to investigate any spills from this area to determine whether a breach of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 has occurred. DEC is investigating a saline water spill at Mt Percy operations that occurred on 22 May 2007. This investigation is currently underway and it is not appropriate for me to comment on the details at this stage. KCGM has been required to provide a full investigation report into these incidents, including outlining actions to minimise the risk of such incidents occurring again
- (13) Not applicable.