

CARNARVON ARTESIAN BASIN REHABILITATION PROJECT

537. Hon KEN BASTON to the minister representing the Minister Assisting the Minister for Water Resources:

On 24 May 2002, the regional manager of the Midwest-Gascoyne region of the Water and Rivers Commission wrote to the Carnarvon pastoralists setting out the six licensing principles agreed to by all parties for artesian wells constructed under the Carnarvon artesian basin rehabilitation project. Will the minister advise -

- (1) Has the local water resources management committee been established, as outlined within the agreement; and
 - (a) if so, who has been appointed to this committee; and
 - (b) if not, when will this agreed principle be implemented?
- (2) Does monitoring of the aquifer indicate that the aquifer is under significant demand?
- (3) Is ground water abstraction from the Carnarvon artesian basin aquifer likely to become significant in the immediate future under the terms of the agreed principles regarding the 20 per cent of the estimated sustainable yield?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

On behalf of the minister representing the Minister Assisting the Minister for Water Resources, I thank Hon Ken Baston for some notice of the question. Honourable members might be surprised to hear that about three years ago Hon Ken Baston and I were on site discussing this issue. It is a strange turn of events that brings us to question time today.

- (1) No.
 - (a) Not applicable.
 - (b) The Rights in Water and Irrigation Act provides for the establishment of water resource management committees. The current water resource management committee policy identifies a management committee for the combined Gascoyne ground water area with timing dependent on demand for the water resource.
- (2) Current ground water monitoring does not indicate that the Carnarvon artesian resource is under stress. As Hon Ken Baston and I know, the reverse is more likely to be true.
- (3) I acknowledge that there are significant emerging demands on the Carnarvon artesian basin system. The Department of Environment is planning to review the management and resource allocation policies for this resource to ensure the sustainable use of this resource and equity in water allocation to the various industry demands.