

OPERATIONAL AND ABANDONED MINES — ENVIRONMENTAL BONDS

1296. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to question on notice No. 2792 asked by Hon Jon Ford, and answered on 9 November 2010, and ask:

- (a) how many operational mines are there in Western Australia;
- (b) how many operational mines have environmental bonds, or similar attached to them;
- (c) how many operational mines that have environmental bonds, or similar attached to them have had their bonds returned;
- (d) which are the companies that have had their environmental bonds returned;
- (e) what is the value of the bonds not returned to companies;
- (f) how many open cut mines are there in Western Australia;
- (g) how many open cut mines have been abandoned in Western Australia;
- (h) how many open cut mines that are shorter than 20 metres long and 10 metres wide have been abandoned;
- (i) does the figure answered in (h) include old underground uncovered shafts; and
- (j) if no to (i), how many abandoned and unsealed shafts are there in Western Australia?

**Hon Ken Baston replied:**

The Department of Mines and Petroleum advises:

- (a) In Western Australia there are 1016 operating mine sites as at 14 July 2014.
- (b) There are 4135 environmental bonds still held for mining operations. There are more bonds than operating mine sites as a result of some sites having multiple bonds, and some bonds still being held on sites which are no longer operating.
- (c) As part of the transition to the Mining Rehabilitation Fund, 1362 environmental bonds have been retired.
- (d) The requested information may be considered commercial-in-confidence and to verify this DMP would need to contact each tenement holder. Significant resources would be required to do this and therefore DMP is not in a position to provide an answer to this question.
- (e) The Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) still retains unconditional performance bonds to the value of \$973 616 767.
- (f) There are currently (as at 14 July 2014) 921 open cut mines being mined in Western Australia. DMP maintains a State-wide record of mine sites that is publicly available, namely the online Mines and Mineral Deposits (MINEDEX) database system.
- (g) The number of open cut mines classified in that system as shut or under care and maintenance is 2373. Note however that the MINEDEX database does not specifically record the 'abandoned' classification. DMP conducted a detailed inventory (carried out between 1999 and 2010) of 'abandoned mine features' for parts of Western Australia, and data from this inventory is also within MINEDEX. This inventory records 1129 open cut mines, but whether those mines are still 'abandoned' today is not recorded.
- (h) DMP notes that MINEDEX does not record the dimensions of open cut mines in its State-wide dataset, particularly as it is a parameter that changes with time for active mines. Within the component of MINEDEX that is from the detailed inventory of abandoned mine features between 1999 and 2010 but not covering the full State, dimensions were recorded. A total of 254 sites in the inventory are open cuts with a length shorter than 20 metres long and a width shorter than 10 metres.
- (i) No
- (j) Within the detailed inventory of abandoned mine features, a total of 26 508 underground mining features are recorded. At the time of the inventory (observation dates range from 1999 to 2010) 84.3 per cent were still evident as shafts, 11.4 per cent were rehabilitated and 4.3 per cent were consumed by mining infrastructure. The detailed observations for these mining features are also available within MINEDEX.