

COCKBURN SOUND — FISH STOCK LOSSES

1462. Hon DARREN WEST to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the recent fish deaths in Cockburn Sound.

- (1) What agencies responded on the weekend of the fish deaths—20 to 22 November—and what did their response entail?
- (2) Why did it take more than four days from the time the fish deaths were reported to the time a health warning was issued?
- (3) What attempts were made to inform people of the fish deaths on the weekend of 21 and 22 November?
- (4) What policies or protocols govern these types of incidents and were they followed in this instance?
- (5) What new fish deaths have been discovered this week and what has the government done in response?
- (6) What further action is the government planning to take in relation to the fish deaths in Cockburn Sound?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The Department of Fisheries investigated all the FishWatch reports of fish deaths from Thursday, 19 November through to Friday, 20 November, including overnight, and over the weekend of 21 and 22 November. The Department of Environment Regulation responded to reports on 20 November by carrying out investigations of possible sources. Only a small number of dead fish had been found by Friday night.
- (2) A media release was issued by the Department of Fisheries on Sunday, 22 November after large numbers of dead fish were found. A joint media release from the Departments of Fisheries and Health was issued on Monday, 23 November.
- (3) See the answer to (2) above. In addition, Department of Fisheries staff contacted Recfishwest, as the peak body for recreational fishers, on Saturday morning when large numbers of dead fish were found. Recfishwest published this on its website and in social media.
- (4) The Department of Fisheries follows the existing protocols and procedures on fish kills. This includes cross-government coordination with relevant agencies, including the Department of Health.
- (5) About 600 dead blowfish have been found at Point Peron and at Garden Island. Some of these fish have provided better samples for laboratory analysis and are being tested.
- (6) Systematic and exhaustive investigations by a number of agencies into the potential causes of the event, both natural and unnatural, are continuing.