

NORTH SCOTT REEF AND BROWSE BASIN — ROCK OUTCROP ISLANDS

1256. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to the three rock outcrops that have been discovered by Geoscience Australia, that are part of the North Scott Reef and Browse Basin, regarded as ‘islands’ under the law of the sea because they are naturally formed and are ‘above ordinary high water’, and I ask:

- (a) how long does the department project these islands will remain above ordinary high water due to the advent of predicted sea level rise;
- (b) for each of the three rock outcrops what is the individual height above ordinary high water;
- (c) will the Minister identify the location of each of these outcrops; and
- (d) when these three rock outcrops drop below ordinary high water, what will be the status of the State’s current claim to ownership of the increased proportion of the Browse gas field?

Hon Ken Baston replied:

The Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) advises:

- (a) Due to the wide range of views on and associated uncertainty of the effect of the specific impacts of climate change, DMP is unable to answer this question.
- (b) This information is held by Geoscience Australia, and has not yet been provided to DMP.
- (c) This information is held by Geoscience Australia, not DMP. DMP has to date only been provided with the new Australian Maritime Boundaries for the area. Based on this information DMP assumes the rocks are in the North Scott Reef and Seringapatam Reef areas.
- (d) Once “islands” have been identified, it is understood from information from Geoscience Australia that the jurisdictional status would not change should the islands subsequently drop below the high water level.