

AUSTRALIAN WORLDWIDE EXPLORATION LIMITED — FRACKING

1102. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to the proposal by Australian Worldwide Exploration Limited (AWE Ltd) to carry out an onshore unconventional gas fracking operation called Drover 01 in the Shire of Coorow in the Mid West, and I ask:

- (a) is the Minister aware of the location of the proposal;
- (b) what advice did the Minister or the Department of Water (DOW) provide to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in relation to this project and whether or not it ought to be assessed by the EPA;
- (c) is the Minister aware that the proposed fracking operation is close to a proclaimed Priority 1 public drinking water source area called the Mount Perron bore field (or well field);
- (d) can the Minister confirm how close the proposed Drover 01 frack well is to the Mount Perron public drinking water supply bore field and water storage facility;
- (e) did the Minister or the DOW make the EPA specifically aware that the proposed fracking operation is close to the Mount Perron proclaimed public drinking water supply bore field and water storage facility, which supplies the community of Green Head with drinking water;
- (f) if yes to (e), how and when did this notification occur;
- (g) if no to (e), why not;
- (h) if and when AWE Ltd carries out a full horizontal drilling and fracking campaign based on the Drover 01 well, how far might that extend in any given direction, given overseas experience;
- (i) is the Minister aware that the 2008 DOW report on the management of the Mount Perron facility refers to the Mount Peron well field area as a 'leaky semi-confined aquifer';
- (j) is the Minister aware that a meeting was convened on 31 October 2013 between officers from the DoW, Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP), Office of the EPA and the proponent to discuss the proposal;
- (k) if yes to (j), did the DoW officials make it clear to those present that the proposed frack well is in close proximity to a proclaimed, Priority 1 public drinking water source bore field;
- (l) if no to (j), why not;
- (m) is the Minister aware that nowhere in the public documents produced by the EPA or the proponent (AWE Ltd) in relation to this proposal is there any mention of the fact that the proposed frack well is close to, or anywhere near, a proclaimed public drinking water source area;
- (n) will the Minister conduct a transparent investigation to establish whether DoW either failed in its statutory responsibility to alert the EPA and the public about the proximity of the frack well to the proclaimed public drinking water source area, or, alternatively, colluded with the proponent to ensure this information was withheld from the EPA and the public;
- (o) if no to (n), why not;
- (p) given the proximity of the proposed frack well to the proclaimed public drinking water source area and the non-assessment of this by the EPA, will the Minister intervene to prevent any fracking of Drover 01 pending a proper assessment; and
- (q) if no to (p), why not?

**Hon Ken Baston replied:**

- (a) Yes.
- (b) The Department of Water provided advice to the Environmental Protection Authority on the water resources of the area, including the location of the Mount Peron Water Reserve used for drinking water supplies. No comment was made by the Department of Water on whether the proposal ought to be assessed by the Environmental Protection Authority.
- (c) Yes.
- (d) The proposed Drover 01 site is approximately 4 kilometres to the east of the Water Corporation bore located in the Mount Peron Water Reserve.

- (e) Yes.
- (f) The Department of Water provided a letter to the Environmental Protection Authority on 13 November 2013.
- (g) Not applicable.
- (h) The Department of Water has not seen a proposal for a full horizontal drilling and fracking campaign and is therefore unable to comment on the extent and direction of the future drilling that may or may not be proposed.
- (i) Yes.
- (j) Yes.
- (k) Yes.
- (l) Not applicable.
- (m) No. Public advice provided by the Environmental Protection Authority under section 39A(7) on the proposal dated 18 November 2013 identifies the location of the Water Corporation bore and notes that the Water Corporation is the closest licensed groundwater abstractor.
- (n) No.
- (o) The Department of Water notified the Environmental Protection Authority about the distance of the Drover 01 well to the Water Corporation bore and the Mount Peron Water Reserve.
- (p) No.
- (q) The Environmental Protection Authority assessment was conducted with full disclosure by the Department of Water of all relevant facts.