

CARNARVON ARTESIAN BASIN, ABSTRACTION LEVELS

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

I refer to the Carnarvon artesian basin.

- (1) Is the minister aware that if there is a significant ongoing draw down of water from the aquifer, such as with a long-term, high-using commercial project, the natural pressure on the bore system could drop and the viability of the basin would be in jeopardy?
- (2) To this end, what financial contribution will be required from new users - for example, Gunson Resources Ltd-Coburn Mineral Sand Project - for access to this underground water supply?
- (3) If there is no direct financial contribution to rehabilitating the Carnarvon artesian basin, does the minister agree that there should be?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

On behalf of the minister representing the Minister Assisting the Minister for Water Resources, I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The minister is aware that large-scale, long-term, high water-use projects could impact on the Carnarvon artesian basin system; however, the minister is not aware of a large decline in ground water levels jeopardising the future of the resource. The Department of Environment will manage use of the aquifer to prevent this occurring. As part of its ongoing management, the Department of Environment is planning to review the management and resource allocation policies for this resource to ensure sustainable uses of the resource and equity in water allocation to the various industry demands. Meanwhile, new water licence applications are assessed on an individual case-by-case basis to ensure that any allocation of water is sustainable.
- (2) Ground water users in Western Australia are not charged for water abstraction.
- (3) The minister is not aware of a need to rehabilitate the Carnarvon artesian basin as current abstraction is considered to be sustainable.