

WATER — IRRIGATION PIPELINES — PILBARA

3443. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the use of pipelines to supply water for irrigation in the Pilbara, and I ask:

- (a) is the department aware of the distance at which pumping water through pipelines for irrigated agriculture becomes financially unviable;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) if yes to (a), what is the distance at which piping water is financially unviable for irrigated agriculture;
- (d) if yes to (a), will the Minister table the report that details this; and
- (e) if no to (d), why not?

Hon Ken Baston replied:

- (a) The Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA) has knowledge of pre-feasibility assessments in the Pilbara and West Kimberley, and practical experience in the Carnarvon area (Gascoyne Foodbowl).
- (b–c) The answer is highly variable and dependant on infrastructure, geography and agricultural commodities under consideration.

In the Pilbara, the adopted criteria used by GHD in the pre-feasibility “Pilbara Surplus Mine Dewater Study” report (July 2015) for a 5000 ha irrigation area was 30km. This was based on a review of the areas of existing irrigation schemes in Western Australia and their distances from water sources.

The Northern borefield currently under construction at Carnarvon is up to 24km from the irrigation area. The cost for this system is expected to be \$25m, including bore field development, a 24km collector main and powerline – required to deliver 4 GL/a of groundwater from 35 production wells.

- (d–e) The GHD “Pilbara Surplus Mine Dewater Study” (DOW 0814) is a public document available from the Department of Water – “Water for Food” download site. A copy of the report is attached [see tabled paper 3625.].

In regards to Carnarvon, a discussion of costs, management and operational issues associated with development of the irrigation distribution system is contained within the recently completed Carnarvon Ministerial Advisory Committee Review, conducted by the Hon Minister Davies and I.