

WATER — BROOME SOUTH WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT — LEAKING EFFLUENT

3790. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to the leaking of effluent at the Broome South Waste Water Treatment Plant (BSWWTP) and Broome Golf Course, into the Ramsar listed and National Heritage listed Roebuck Bay wetlands and proposed Yawuru Nagulagun Roebuck Bay Marine Park, and I ask:

- (a) when did the leaking of effluent from the BSWWTP into groundwater first come to the attention of the Minister and the department;
- (b) how long has it been known that effluent has been leaking from the BSWWTP into groundwater;
- (c) what volume of effluent is estimated to be leaking into the groundwater per day and per year, and discharging into Roebuck Bay from the BSWWTP;
- (d) how much nitrogen and phosphorus is estimated to be entering and polluting Roebuck Bay per day and per year from the BSWWTP leakage;
- (e) is the Minister aware that the BSWWTP was reclassified in 2015 as “Contaminated – Remediation Required” under the *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*, and the golf course next door to the plant, which uses treated wastewater from BSWWTP to irrigate the fairways and green, has been classified as “Potentially Contaminated – Investigation Required”;
- (f) is the Minister aware of what actions are proposed by the Water Corporation to fix the leak in the BSWWTP;
- (g) what options have been put forward to fix the leaking ponds;
- (h) will the Minister table the options for fixing the leaking ponds;
- (i) if no to (h), why not;
- (j) is the Minister aware that nitrogen and phosphorus in wastewater contribute to blooms of the cyanobacteria *Lyngbya majuscula*;
- (k) is the Minister aware of the worsening blooms of the cyanobacteria *Lyngbya majuscula* over the last decade in Roebuck Bay;
- (l) is the Minister aware of growing community concern from all sectors of the Broome community about this serious issue;
- (m) is the Minister aware that exposure to *Lyngbya* can cause severe irritation including skin and eye irritation, respiratory irritation and exacerbation of pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma following inhalation of dried *Lyngbya*, and gastrointestinal irritation following ingestion of dried *Lyngbya*;
- (n) is the Minister aware that *Lyngbya* has been linked to the formation of tumours in marine turtles, alterations in turtle blood biochemistry and increased dugong strandings;
- (o) is the Minister aware that *Lyngbya* can cause seagrass and mangrove loss;
- (p) will the Minister guarantee that this serious contamination from the BSWWTP will be halted within the next two months;
- (q) if no to (p), when will this serious contamination be halted; and
- (r) will any action be taken against those responsible for allowing this serious contamination to continue for so long?

**Hon Ken Baston replied:**

The Minister for Water has provided the following response.

- (a)–(r) There are a number of known contributors of nitrogen and phosphorus to the groundwater along the Broome Peninsula, including agriculture, farming, septic tanks and fertiliser run off in stormwater.

The Water Corporation is undertaking a comprehensive environmental investigation to assess contributors to, and the impact of, elevated nutrients on Roebuck Bay. This is consistent with Department of Environment Regulation’s requirements and will be overseen by an independent auditor. Seasonal variations must be taken into account and it is anticipated the investigation will be complete in early 2018. Results will inform the most appropriate course of action and will be shared with any interested parties.

This is an important issue to the local community. Engagement has been ongoing since 2014 and at the latest update on 1 March 2016, attendees were advised since the beginning of the year, flows to

Broome South wastewater treatment plant have been reduced by 20 per cent and replacement of two holding ponds suspected to be leaking will be carried out shortly.