

KOOLAN ISLAND MINE — FLOODING

1384. Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE to the minister representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

My question is numbered C1474. I refer to the flooding of the Koolan Island mine caused by the seawall slump on Tuesday, 25 November 2014.

- (1) Will the minister provide a time line from Mount Gibson Iron and the Department of Mines and Petroleum for all aspects of the incident, including response and management plans?
- (2) What is being done to mitigate the flow of suspended material and the deposition of pollutants on nearby reefs?
- (3) What machinery and fuel or oil storage was in the pit at the time of the collapse?
- (4) Will there be an independent inquiry into the collapse?
- (5) If no to (4), why not?
- (6) Is a bond still held for this mine, and what is it?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, the answer is as follows —

- (1) In accordance with the Department of Mines and Petroleum's mandate as a robust environmental regulator, the department responded quickly and professionally to the incident on Koolan Island. The principal aspects of the time line relating to the incident are: on 25 November DMP was advised by Mount Gibson Iron Ltd of uncontrolled ingress of seawater into the main pit at Koolan Island; on 26 November DMP was advised by Mount Gibson Iron that the pit had flooded and was connected to the marine environment; on 26 November a teleconference of representatives of DMP, the Department of Transport, the Department of Environment Regulation and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority was held to coordinate the government agency responses to the incident; on 27 November senior officers from DMP and Mount Gibson Iron met and discussed the incident, and the company's response to the incident; and on 28 November an environmental inspector and safety inspector from DMP attended the site with senior officers from Mount Gibson Iron.
- (2) The inspection undertaken by DMP on 28 November identified that there was no observable sediment plume escaping from the pit into the marine environment; however, DMP considers that there is a risk of sediment being exported to the marine environment during tidal movements. The company has engaged third party experts to undertake water quality assessments of the surrounding marine environment to determine whether there has been any impact on the external environment. The outcome of this assessment will inform any action required by the company to control sediment dispersion.
- (3) Initial assessment by DMP has identified that two diesel-powered pumps with fuel tanks were within the pit at the time of the flooding. All other mobile mining equipment had previously been removed from the pit by the company.
- (4) No.
- (5) DMP is coordinating with other state regulators on the response to the incident and the investigation into the cause of the incident.
- (6) Since the commencement of the mining rehabilitation fund last year, the Western Australian government now has a perpetual fund available to undertake rehabilitation on mine sites if the company is unable to do so. There is more than \$32 million in the mining rehabilitation fund. The company has responded promptly to the incident in undertaking spill response and monitoring of the marine environment, and is cooperating with DMP and the other state regulators. There is a \$2.7 million unconditional performance bond held for the tenement that contains the pit.