

CONSERVATION ESTATE

1099. Hon KEN BASTON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the minister's media statement of 20 September. What is the difference in protection status between a national park, a conservation park, an unclassified conservation park and a nature reserve?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

I thank Hon Ken Baston for some notice of the question. The Minister for the Environment has provided the following response.

The honourable member's question is best answered by reference to several statutes. The purposes for which national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves are managed are stated in section 56 of the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. There is no difference in their protection status under that act on the basis of whether they are classified as class A, or unclassified under the Land Administration Act 1997. Under the Land Administration Act 1997, a national park or conservation park, whether class A or not, is afforded the highest level of security of purpose and tenure. A nature reserve classified as class A under the Land Administration Act has the same protection under that act as a national park or a conservation park, and a nature reserve that is not classified as class A has a lesser level of security of purpose and tenure.

Under the Mining Act 1978, the highest level of protection is afforded to national parks, irrespective of their class or location; class A nature reserves, irrespective of their location; and class A conservation parks in the south west land division and the Shires of Esperance and Ravensthorpe. Conservation parks that are classified as class A but are located outside the south west land division and the Shires of Esperance and Ravensthorpe, along with conservation parks and nature reserves that are not class A, all have a lower level of protection under the Mining Act.

Irrespective of whether they are classified as class A or unclassified, there is no difference in the protection afforded to a national park, conservation park or nature reserve under the Petroleum Act 1967. Government policy is to prohibit mineral and petroleum exploration and production in national parks and class A nature reserves for applications submitted after 10 February 2001.