

WEST ATLAS OIL LEAK

992. Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the West Atlas oil rig leak.

- (1) What is the current daily leak rate in litres and drums from the West Atlas oil rig?
- (2) Are funds being made available by any party to the Department of Environment and Conservation to prepare for the impact of the oil slick in Western Australian jurisdiction?
- (3) If yes to (2), which company or government is providing these funds and how much is being provided?
- (4) If yes to (2), what is the money being used for?
- (5) Given that the oil slick has been going on for seven weeks, what preparation has DEC made for dealing with the impact on the WA coast and waters should it occur?
- (6) What methods are currently being employed to capture or mitigate the oil leak and by whom?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The oil spill is in commonwealth waters and the response is being managed by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority—AMSA—under the national plan arrangements. This question should, however, be referred to the Department of Transport as the WA lead agency on this matter.
- (2) The Department of Environment and Conservation has an undertaking from the commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts—DEWHA—that costs incurred by the department in undertaking oil spill response actions approved under the national plan will be covered by DEWHA. It is understood that DEWHA will seek reimbursement of those costs from the company PTTEP Australasia.
- (3) See the answer to (2).
- (4) Actions approved under the national plan, and currently being undertaken by DEC are —
 - (i) DEC has deployed an officer, trained in oiled wildlife response, to Ashmore Island to assist DEWHA's response to oiled birds and other wildlife; and
 - (ii) DEC has set up a joint oiled wildlife recovery centre in Broome to be utilised in the event that significant numbers of oiled wildlife are recovered in state and commonwealth waters.

This reminds me that I was in Broome last week and I saw the facility. It is a very good facility and if members happen to be in Broome in future, the department would be very happy to show them around.

- (5) DEC is in daily contact with the Department of Transport, which is, in turn, in contact with AMSA. DEC has appointed an incident control officer to coordinate its response. DEC is monitoring the location of the oil. Oil spill trajectory modelling and risk assessment, based on predicted seasonal weather patterns, have been completed. An assessment of the sensitive environmental assets under threat, such as coral reefs, important turtle-nesting beaches and seabird rookeries in coastal areas at greatest risk, has been completed in order to plan protection action if this becomes necessary. DEC is currently planning to undertake a hydrocarbon survey in inter-tidal areas of the Kimberley region.
- (6) AMSA is coordinating and managing the oil spill response. The two strategies being used are the application of chemical dispersants by vessel to freshly released oil and containment and recovery of oil using booms and skimmers.