

DESALINATION PLANT, COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

3001. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for the Environment

I refer the Minister to *The West Australian* newspaper, dated 10 June 2004 and the article titled 'Minister backs desalination plant,' and ask -

- (a) has the Minister called for a 'cost benefit analysis' of the desalination project;
- (b) if not, when will the 'cost benefit analysis' be conducted;
- (c) if a 'cost benefit analysis' has been conducted, will the Minister table a copy of the report;
- (d) if not, why not;
- (e) has an estimation been made of the building costs and associated on-going costs of the desalination project;
- (f) how was this estimation achieved and will the Minister table a copy of this report;
- (g) if not, why not;
- (h) what would be the increased cost of water to users;
- (i) if the Minister wanted to increase the amount of water available from the Gnangara mound, would it not be easier, quicker and less expensive to order the removal of some or all of the 4.5 million pine trees currently growing on the Gnangara mound; and
- (j) has the Minister confused the amount of water used by these trees, for growth, with the amount of water evaporated by these trees, on a daily basis?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:

- (a) No. This issue is one for the Minister for Government Enterprises to respond to as it refers to the desalination proposal put to Government by the Water Corporation.
- (b)-(h) Not applicable. See answer to (a) above.
- (i) Progressive removal of the pines on the Gnangara Mound is already in place through the Wood Processing (Wesbeam) Agreement Act 2002. However, investigations are currently under way to determine if removal of the pines at an increased rate or from priority areas will have any benefit to groundwater availability for other uses. This work is being done by various government agencies under the direction of the Gnangara Co-ordinating Committee.
- (j) There is no reference made in the media article to the amount of water used by trees, so I do not know what the question is referring to. I am, therefore, unable to answer it.