

GERALDTON PORT, LOADING FACILITIES

379. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

I refer the minister to the prospect of a massive increase in the volume of iron ore being delivered into the port of Geraldton. Given problems with the ageing loader having already resulted in talc being trucked to the port of Bunbury, I ask -

- (1) Is the minister aware that it can take up to three days to clean the 30-year-old loader to facilitate the loading of different minerals?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the Geraldton Port Authority has considered hiring a loader to facilitate the loading of talc through the port?
- (3) Does the minister concede that inadequate loading facilities are threatening to undermine the shipping capacity of the port?
- (4) What level of funding does the minister anticipate will be necessary to address the loading problems at the port of Geraldton, and will the Government commit to provide those funds?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN replied:

- (1)-(4) I acknowledge that the Government has been too successful and has created an economic miracle in the mid west beyond our wildest expectations. It is true that we have opened up iron ore mining in the mid west for the first time in 30 years, and we also have the prospect of oil being exported through that port. As the member rightly pointed out, this has created some strains on those facilities. Yes; although I do not agree with the precise figures the member gave, I acknowledge that as the volume of the growth of iron ore exports has been far greater than anticipated, we need to look at some additional expenditure to provide separation of various products and to upgrade that loader. That matter is currently being considered by government. I hope to have an answer on that issue in the next month or two. As I say, it is a good position to be in as we have had more growth than we could have possibly expected.