

SCOTT COASTAL PLAIN, TEST HOLE FOR WATER BORE LICENCE

1678. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the minister representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Why was a landowner from the Scott coastal plain, who is applying for a water bore licence, requested to provide a test hole, at a cost of approximately \$20 000, without any assurance of -
 - (a) receiving a licence at all; or
 - (b) receiving a licence with no more than a one or two-year tenure?
- (2) Is this policy being used to discourage productive agriculture in this area so that the entire underground water source from the southern Yarragadee aquifer can be exploited for the Perth market?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply -

- (1) It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that water can be taken sustainably. The Water and Rivers Commission often requests applicants for large volumes that are essential to their business success to provide additional information, such as hydrological reports and pump testing, to help it assess the potential impacts that individual large abstractions may have on the environment. The delay in relation to this particular licence is because the commission is awaiting further information from the applicant to demonstrate that the water can be taken from that source sustainably.
 - (a) While no guarantee is given, the commission does give careful consideration to the issue of a licence once it is established that the water requested is available and can be abstracted sustainably. The decision can be appealed.
 - (b) This licence is for a new development and the water requested is not from the south west Yarragadee aquifer. In these cases, it is the commission's policy to issue the initial licence for a term negotiated with the applicant and usually for two years to allow for the proposed development to be implemented. Following implementation of the development, the licence would be extended for a longer term. This is a community-supported policy to avoid speculation in water stopping genuine development.

It is the commission's position to issue licences for up to 10 years. This provides sufficient security to the licensee as well as providing the commission with the formal opportunity to review the licence terms and conditions to ensure that they are appropriate after 10 years. Since December 2002, the local regional office has had a series of discussions with the Whicher Water Resource Management Committee and the Scott River Growers Group Inc about licence tenure. Commitments have been made and are being carried out by the south west regional office to move towards 10-year licence periods when those currently held expire.
- (2) No, there is no such policy.