

SCOTT REEF — MARINE SEISMIC SURVEY — EFFECTS

6221. Hon Giz Watson to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to the statement that a proposal may be implemented pursuant to the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 signed by David Templeman, Minister for the Environment, published on 31 August 2007, concerning the ‘maxima 3 dimensional marine seismic survey Scott Reef.’, and I ask —

- (1) Can the Minister explain the rationale and justification as to why a buffer of three kilometres was imposed as per condition 6-3 (1) to minimise impacts on breeding turtles?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Can the Minister explain the rationale and justification as to why a buffer of five kilometres was imposed as per condition 6-3 (2) to minimise impacts on breeding turtles?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?
- (5) In relation to Schedule 3 of the above referred to proposal published on 31 August 2007, can the Minister explain the rationale and justification as to why the acoustic source will need to be fully shut down if any large cetacean is within 1.5 kilometres of the seismic vessel?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?
- (7) In relation to Schedule 3 of the above referred to proposal published on 31 August 2007, can the Minister explain the rationale and justification as to why the acoustic source will need to be fully shut down if any large cetacean shows signs of distress or disorientation between 1.5 kilometres and three kilometres?
- (8) If no to (7), why not?
- (9) Has the proponent complied with all the conditions for this proposal published on 31 August 2007?
- (10) If no to (9), which specific conditions have not been complied with, and what is the reason for non-compliance?
- (11) If yes to (9), how was compliance verified for all the conditions?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1) A buffer of 3 kilometres was imposed to attenuate noise to levels which are unlikely to harm turtles outside the breeding season. The buffer distance is based on published research conducted by Curtin University.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) A buffer of 5 kilometres was imposed to attenuate noise to levels which are unlikely to harm turtles during the breeding season. The buffer distance is based on published research conducted by Curtin University.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Complete shutdown of the acoustic source when cetaceans are within 1.5 kilometres minimises the potential of causing harm to the animals. This is based on the Australian Government code of conduct for interactions between seismic vessels and large whales.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) Complete shutdown of the acoustic source when cetaceans are close by and showing signs of distress minimises the potential of causing harm to the animals. This is based on the Australian Government code of conduct for interactions between seismic vessels and large whales.
- (8) Not applicable.
- (9) No.
- (10) Conditions 5-1, 5-5, 5-6 and 6-3.

The reason for non-compliance was operator error in relation to discharging airguns outside defined areas and not adhering to minimum times between adjacent survey lines.

DEC has reviewed Woodside Energy Ltd's investigation report into the non-compliances. Woodside took immediate action when they detected the non-compliances, implemented corrective actions as

detailed in the report to prevent the recurrence of non-compliance, and there was no evidence of environmental impact from the non-compliances. DEC has determined that no further action is required.

- (11) Not applicable.