SWAN–CANNING CATCHMENT — NUTRIENT OFFSET POLICY

506. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer the minister to "Draft Policy SRT/D20: Nutrient Offset Policy for the Swan Canning Catchment", the objective of which is to enable development and land use changes to occur in the Swan–Canning catchment without causing deterioration of the ecological health and community benefit of the Swan Canning Riverpark due to nutrient inputs.

(1) Given that the public comment period closed on 30 July 2010, when will the government finalise the policy?

(2) Is the minister aware of any current or proposed projects in the city that have stalled due to the Swan River Trust and the Department of Environment and Conservation imposing a total nitrogen trigger value for dewatering discharge to the Swan River of one milligram per litre?

(3) Can the minister advise whether there is any treatment system available in Australia that would enable this dewatering discharge level to be achieved?

(4) Is the minister concerned that projects such as the Perth City Link and the Perth foreshore redevelopment, both of which require substantial dewatering, will encounter problems due to this new guideline for the disposal of groundwater into the Swan River?

The PRESIDENT: That question and a few others are pushing the boundaries of concise.

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this concise question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Environment —

(1) The Swan River Trust received nine submissions in response to the draft nutrient offset policy, and the policy is currently under review as a result of those submissions. I expect to receive an updated draft policy from the trust by mid-August.

(2) No; however, I am aware that the trust has worked closely with a number of developers and government agencies to secure outcomes that did not result in unacceptable levels of nutrients discharging into the river.

(3) I am advised that stripping nitrogen from groundwater discharge is difficult due to the high rates of discharge and the frequently high concentrations of nitrogen encountered in groundwater around the metropolitan area. I am advised that industry is investigating technological approaches to the issue, but so far it has proved difficult due to the high rates of discharge and the high concentrations and mix of contaminants. When it is possible, the trust works closely with developers to find alternative approaches to groundwater management and disposal.

(4) No.