

PERTH STORMS — SEWAGE OVERFLOWS

112. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Environment:

- (1) Is the minister aware of any sewage facilities overflowing into the Swan and Canning Rivers since Sunday, 21 March 2010; and, if so, what are the details?
- (2) If yes to (1), has the minister received, or does she expect to receive, a report from the Swan River Trust on these overflows, and will she make the report public?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) I have been advised by the Water Corporation that 21 million litres of waste water overflowed into the Canning, Southern and Swan Rivers because of prolonged loss of mains power to 130 waste water pumping stations across Perth.
- (2) On receiving an initial report from the Water Corporation on 23 March 2010, the Department of Environment and Conservation advised me that a number of sewage pump stations were overflowing as a result of the storm on 22 March. Under section 72 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986, the Water Corporation is required to notify the Department of Environment and Conservation of discharges of waste. The Water Corporation has advised me that a section 72 report was submitted to DEC and the Swan River Trust this afternoon relating to the discharge of waste water. Regarding the release of the report, I refer the member to the Minister for Water.

Given that there is significant interest in this matter, I would also like to advise the house that the Department of Health released a statement earlier today, advising that Perth waterways are again safe for public use after testing of the ocean and rivers throughout the metropolitan area revealed that water quality had returned to normal levels. The Department of Health director of environmental health, Jim Dodds, has said that, after comprehensive sampling, he is satisfied that it is safe for the public to return to recreational activities in and on the water. He has indicated that one area of the Canning River, upstream of the Kent Street weir, still shows some evidence of the storm's effect, and that primary contact such as swimming is still not recommended at this site. He has also reminded the public to exercise caution, as there may still be submerged debris in the river. I would certainly concur with that advice.

I can also advise the house that the Swan River Trust this afternoon advised me that river oxygen levels are also returning to normal, but that given the large amount of organic material that entered the river following the storm, there will be ongoing effects.