

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (COST RECOVERY) REGULATIONS 2021

375. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to following assessment of the fee structure that operates under the Environmental Protection (Cost Recovery) Regulations 2021 made by Mr Chris Rodwell of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia that were published in a *Business News Western Australia* article of 15 February —

“The fees the state government has begun charging businesses for environmental impact assessments are the highest such fees anywhere in the nation.

- (1) Are these fees the state government is charging the highest such fee anywhere in the nation?
- (2) If yes, why is the government charging these uncompetitive fees?
- (3) If no, how is Mr Rodwell inaccurate?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Environment.

- (1)–(3) The pricing model for part IV cost recovery under the Environmental Protection (Cost Recovery) Regulations 2021 has been developed in accordance with the state government’s *Guidelines for the costing and pricing of government services (2015)* and reflects the need for a fair and reasonable true cost of services. Prior to undertaking consultation on the draft cost-recovery model, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation engaged Ernst and Young Australia to undertake a pricing and demand validation exercise and provide a final report. Ernst and Young found that the methodology and assumptions applied by DWER in its pricing and demand management models were logical and reasonable, and this final validation report was tabled last year. I refer to tabled paper 978.

DWER will use the funding received through cost recovery to provide an effective service to proponents by building capacity in periods of high demand, while ensuring that strong environmental protections remain. It is expected that the 18-month review of the part IV cost-recovery program in mid-2023 will capture and reflect an updated cost of services, incorporating regulatory efficiencies appropriately.