DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION INSPECTORS - PORT OF ESPERANCE LEAD EXPORTS

227.   Hon ANTHONY FELS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for the Environment:

Will the minister explain why departmental inspectors charged with the task of carrying out environmental safety compliance inspections at the port of Esperance for the export of lead by Magellan Metals Pty Ltd failed to notice that the company was in breach of its lead export licence conditions because they were not appropriately clothed for the task?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

I thank the Hon Anthony Fels for this question. I provide a response in terms given to me by the Minister for the Environment.

This question goes to the heart of one of the key issues being examined by the Legislative Assembly's Education and Health Standing Committee. The Education and Health Standing Committee is inquiring into the cause and extent of lead pollution in the Esperance area. The terms of reference for the parliamentary inquiry include -

(e)   whether the Department of Environment and Conservation's responsibilities in relation to the Esperance Port Authority processes, practices and procedures, including the legal and regulatory framework, were adequate and properly exercised; . . .

The committee's terms of reference also extend to the actions of the port and the company. The government has established the parliamentary inquiry to determine the answer to this and other questions, and to make recommendations that ensure it never happens again. The committee is conducting public hearings this week, and both the department and the minister are cooperating fully. We look forward to the report of the committee in August.

Hon Norman Moore interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Giz Watson wishes to ask a question. If members want to have a discussion, they should leave the chamber provided they are not in the chamber to answer questions.