

**WATER CORPORATION — MINNIVALE RESERVOIR — ASBESTOS**

*Statement by Minister for Water*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water)** [2.08 pm]: I rise to update the house on the outcomes of investigations into the Minnivale Reservoir asbestos exposure incident that occurred late last year. It is a serious matter and I acknowledge the distress it has caused Water Corporation employees and contractors who had been working at the site. Those impacted continue to be provided access to counselling and assistance services. They have also been offered the opportunity to participate in ongoing health checks and the option to be included on the corporation's asbestos exposure register.

Following the incident, Water Corporation used an industry-accepted industrial safety investigation tool known as the incident cause analysis method to investigate and identify the cause of the failure in its systems. The results of ICAM were independently reviewed by workplace safety expert Dr Graham Edkins and his recommendations were incorporated in the final report. The investigation identified gaps in the corporation's asbestos management process and found that there were several opportunities when asbestos-containing material should have been identified at Minnivale.

In addition to ICAM, the Water Corporation received permission from WorkSafe Western Australia to conduct a re-enactment of the grinding of mastic—otherwise known as a caulking compound—that had taken place at Minnivale. The re-enactment was overseen by occupational hygienist Dr Laurie Glossop at Wardelocking Reservoir near Wagin. The site was selected for simulation because it contained the same white asbestos in the caulking compound as was found at Minnivale. The simulation was designed as a worst-case scenario of exposure to asbestos. Dr Glossop's report found that the concentration of asbestos in the simulation ranged from below the limit of detection to within the current workplace exposure standard for asbestos set by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission. He concluded that the people who performed the caulking removal at Minnivale were likely to have had significantly lower exposure to asbestos than that recorded at Wardelocking. All information relating to the Minnivale incident has been made available to industry regulators WorkSafe WA and the Department of Environment Regulation. Results of both the incident cause analysis method and simulation were communicated directly to employees and contractors on 29 January 2016 and were made publicly available on the Water Corporation's website. Unions, regulatory authorities, local shires and other stakeholders were also advised that the reports were available online and available for briefing.

The Water Corporation has been notified by the Department of Environment Regulation that it will take no further action on its regulatory powers under the Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004. The Water Corporation immediately put in place corrective actions and has commenced the implementation of a \$1 million corporate-wide asbestos management project, which is to be completed within 12 months. The project delivery process now requires multiple checkpoints for asbestos identification and management. As a fundamental principle, the Water Corporation will now assume that asbestos is present on all sites unless otherwise verified. Furthermore, the Water Corporation reviewed about 1 000 projects it has completed in recent years against its asbestos assets register, which identified no other sites where asbestos has not been correctly identified.

The Water Corporation takes full responsibility for the incident. The organisation sincerely regrets the distress it has caused to those employees and contractors involved in this incident.