

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT — CONFLICT OF INTEREST

45. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Environment:

As there are six parts to this question, I have provided a copy for the minister. My question relates to the minister's conflict of interest arising from her husband's employment with Woodside and the correspondence tabled yesterday by the minister in response to question without notice 32. In the minister's letters to the Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Chair of the Environmental Protection Authority and the Acting Appeals Convenor, the minister said that she will continue to meet with various groups, including officers from Woodside. The minister's letters go on to say that if she feels it necessary, she may seek their assistance in providing a departmental officer who can attend such meetings to make an independent record. My question is —

- (1) Given that the minister has already informed the Parliament that she is required to not make decisions about matters surrounding Woodside because her husband works for Woodside, how can the minister now say that she will continue to meet with officers from Woodside?
- (2) How will the minister decide whether it is necessary for a departmental officer to attend such meetings to make an independent record?
- (3) Has the minister or any of her staff had such meetings with officers from Woodside since informing the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Environmental Protection Authority and the Acting Appeals Convenor about her conflict of interest?
- (4) If yes to (3), can the minister advise the house what was discussed at these meetings?
- (5) If yes to (3), was a departmental officer present?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank the member for her question and for giving me a copy of the six questions.

- (1)-(6) I will deal with the preparation of the letter. The letter was prepared by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, on the advice of the State Solicitor. With respect to the particular quote that the member has taken from —

Hon Ken Travers: So it's their fault.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I am just telling the house that the letter was drafted on the advice of the State Solicitor. With respect to that aspect, the advice that I received was that it would be unreasonable for me to not meet with officers from Woodside. It would also be unreasonable for me to not meet with, say, an environmental group.

Hon Sally Talbot: Unreasonable on what basis?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The advice from the State Solicitor was that it would be unreasonable for me to not meet with environmental groups that may have an interest with respect to Woodside. However, in each case, I would make it known that my husband works for Woodside and, as such, I would not make any decisions or give any approvals in respect of Woodside.

With regard to the member's questions about whether I or my staff have met with any officers from Woodside, the answer is no.

Hon Sally Talbot: What about question (2)? How will you decide whether it is necessary for a departmental officer to be there?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I am quite happy to say that in each case I would have a departmental officer there. I would also have an officer from my office, and it would be recorded at the time that I make the declaration, which would be first up in the meeting, that I have a declared conflict of interest. That is my requirement and that is what I will do, because I am open and I am transparent, and I have been so since day one.

Hon Ken Travers: So why do you need to meet —

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I have not met with Woodside and my office has not met with Woodside, so questions (5) and (6) are not applicable.