

POLLUTION, ACID SULPHATE SOIL PROBLEMS

1531. Hon. C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage

I refer the Minister to *The West Australian* of 15 May 2003 and the article titled 'Acids to test developers' and to the Minister's statement on 11 April 2002 regarding soil clean up and ask -

- (a) has the Minister taken the report to Cabinet on how to 'fix' the acid-sulphate soil problems;
- (b) has this report been made public;
- (c) if so, when;
- (d) if not, why not; and
- (e) what action is the Labor Government undertaking to protect wetlands and residents with bores from this pollution threat?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:

- (a) No.
- (b) Yes, copies of the report have been released to the public, and the report has also been made available on the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) web site.
- (c) The report was released in April 2002.
- (d) Answered by (c).
- (e) The Stirling Report recommended that areas in the State with acid sulfate soils are identified through a program of risk mapping, and that the disturbance of these soils by development is controlled by planning measures. Since the release of the report, a preliminary risk map for the Swan Coastal Plain has been released, and State Government has committed \$650 000 for more detailed mapping. The mapping will be linked to a Planning Bulletin that is currently being prepared by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. This planning measure will ensure that development in critical areas is either avoided, or is carried out in accordance with acid sulfate soil management guidelines that have been prepared by the DEP. Additionally, developers, planners, regulators and the general community are being warned about the acid sulfate soil issue through presentations and workshops. A national workshop on the issue was held at Curtin University on 12-13 June to allow local stakeholders to interact with national experts on acid sulfate soils. A major outcome from this workshop is a draft of a State strategy to manage acid sulfate soils in line with strategies developed in other States. The strategy will be released for public comment in September 2003.