

WATER CORPORATION — MINNIVALE RESERVOIR — ASBESTOS

921. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Water:

I refer the minister to the Water Corporation's admission that it exposed staff to asbestos during the refurbishment of the Minnivale reservoir.

- (1) Was the number of people known to have been exposed to asbestos during these works in fact 138, and not 88, as previously acknowledged by the government?
- (2) Were Water Corporation staff and contractors advised by the Water Corporation that the buildings on-site were free of asbestos despite the reservoir plans clearly identifying nine-millimetre asbestos sheeting on the outside of the building?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) It has taken some time for us to work through with contractors that were involved in those site works, alongside our own Water Corporation employees. It now appears that 138 people had an involvement with the site over the entire contract. We have taken time to make sure that we cast a very broad net to ensure that everyone who may have had an involvement or any interaction at that site is availed of the information that the corporation is providing and that they are offered assistance and their names added to the asbestos register. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the number that we provided when we first spoke about this matter in this place, but it was reached as a result of a very thorough, and ongoing, member, I might add, investigation into how this came about.

The Water Corporation does not resile from the fact that its own workers and contractors have been exposed to asbestos. It is absolutely committed to making sure that every person who has been involved receives the appropriate support going forward. The detailed investigation into the incident is continuing. The Water Corporation is meeting with WorkSafe on an ongoing basis. I had a briefing yesterday on where it is up to. The Water Corporation will provide a report to WorkSafe at the end of that process. It is being overseen by a subcommittee of the Water Corporation's board. At that point WorkSafe will provide recommendations or directions to the Water Corporation. In the interim, the Water Corporation is, of course, looking at its other sites, making sure that it is putting in place mechanisms to prevent this from happening again. It takes its responsibility for occupational safety and health very seriously, and this is a very serious matter for the corporation.