

SOUTHERN FORESTS IRRIGATION SCHEME — RECORD BROOK

606. Hon DIANE EVERS to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the southern forests irrigation scheme and the clearing currently occurring at Record Brook.

- (1) What approvals and/or permits have been provided for test drilling in this area, and will the minister please table a copy; and, if not, why not?
- (2) With regard to clearing permit CPS 8345/1 —
 - (a) what actions are expected to be taken by the proponent to comply with condition 8 regarding dieback;
 - (b) is the minister aware of whether a fauna specialist was engaged as per condition 10; and, if yes, what was the outcome;
 - (c) if a fauna specialist is not engaged as required, what is the penalty; and
 - (d) how is the site being monitored to ensure compliance with all conditions of the permits?
- (3) Given the Environmental Protection Authority has not yet completed its assessment of the project, will the minister request the suspension of action until it has been completed; and, if not, why not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

The honourable member has asked questions of a number of portfolios and a number of ministers within this question. I will provide an answer today, but I may not do that in the future—the member will have to ask the appropriate ministers the appropriate questions.

- (1) On 22 August 2019, clearing permit CPS 8345/1 was issued by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to Southern Forests Irrigation Cooperative Ltd under part V of the Environmental Protection Act 1986. The permit authorised the clearing of up to three hectares of native vegetation for the purpose of geotechnical investigations, including clearing for access tracks, test pits and drill pads.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions has granted licence 2994/97A under section 97A of the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 for the licensed activity of geotechnical assessments for investigative works associated with the proposed southern forests irrigation scheme. The licensed activity does not include geotechnical assessments for the purpose of tendering or construction of the southern forests irrigation scheme.

I table a copy of clearing permit CPS 8345/1 and the CALM act licence 2994/97A.

[See paper [3959](#).]

- (2)
 - (a) Condition 8 of the clearing permit requires the permit holder to ensure that all earthmoving machinery is free of soil and vegetation prior to entering and leaving the area subject to clearing. This condition ensures that no dieback-affected soil or other material is brought into the area. It is a responsibility of the permit holder to take necessary actions to ensure that this condition is complied with.
 - (b) Condition 10 of the clearing permit requires a permit holder to report to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation if western ringtail possum, numbat or quokka individuals are identified through a site inspection by a fauna specialist prior to clearing. The permit holder has advised that a fauna specialist was engaged to check for the presence of these species and confirmed that none were present in the area.
 - (c) Contravention of a clearing permit condition is an offence under section 51J of the Environmental Protection Act. The maximum penalty for a body corporate is \$125 000, and a daily penalty of \$25 000 applies.
 - (d) I am advised that DWER inspected the site on 9 June 2020. Further monitoring of compliance will be conducted either onsite or using satellite imaging. In addition, the permit holder is required to provide a written report to the CEO on or before 30 June of the records that are required to be kept under the permit. This report will contribute to the department's monitoring of compliance.
- (3) I am advised that the geotechnical investigation work for the proposed Record Brook reservoir is to inform the design and planning of the proposal. It does not involve the implementation of the proposal. It is not uncommon for investigative works to be undertaken during the Environmental Protection Authority's assessment process. I understand that the proponent has obtained the necessary approvals to implement the test drill.