

SEWAGE SPILLS, NUMBER UNREPORTED

2717. Mrs C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for the Environment

I refer the Minister to the answers to questions on notice No. 1881, asked 9 September 2003, and No. 2335, asked 3 December 2003, and ask -

- (a) what is the estimated sewage loss from the average 800 unreported sewage overflows per year;
- (b) is the Minister concerned that there could be seen to be a conflict of interest with the joint responsibility for the environment and water resources and the unwillingness to investigate unreported sewage spills;
- (c) will the Minister now have the number and extent of unreported sewage spills by the Water Corporation audited; and
- (d) if not, why not?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:

- (a) As these overflows were not reported to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the DEP is unable to provide me with the information. I suggest you refer this question to the Minister for Government Enterprise.
- (b) No.
- (c) No.
- (d) As previously advised, these minor spills relate to blocked household sewers and the like or spills where the sewage is contained in sealed areas and accordingly have insignificant impact on the environment. Major spills are all reported, responded to and investigated. As announced publicly last week, the DEP is prosecuting the Water Corporation for two sewage spills which entered the Swan and Canning Rivers. I have ensured that the DEP has a dedicated Pollution Response Unit and an Environmental Enforcement Unit to respond quickly, gather evidence and commence enforcement action effectively for major pollution incidents, including sewage spills.