

KALTAILS TAILINGS DAM — SEEPAGE OF HYPERSALINE WATER

5968. Hon Paul Llewellyn to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for the Environment

I refer to various documentation which may exist including a 'note to file' dated 7 February 2000, author Ann Barter, concerning the Kaltails tailings dam, a facsimile message dated 14 December 1995 from Jim Tucker, Manager-Kalgoorlie Branch, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to Greg Barret of Kaltails with a subject heading of 'Licence Condition B1 Interpretation' and the proposal by Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines Pty Ltd (KCGM) on behalf of Newmont Australia and Barrick Gold to restart using the Kaltails tailings dam which is partly referred to in Bulletin Nos 1270 and 1273, where the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) states, 'Water recovery has continued on a reduced scale to recover seepage from the southern wall', and I ask —

- (1) Is it correct that the note to file dated 7 February 2000 in part states, 'The larger vegetation to the South and East of the TSF is showing noticeable stress due to the rising water table. I understand that Kaltails is pumping from groundwater recovery bores in an effort to control the rising water table. There are also a couple of very denuded areas from previous tailings spills which they are attempting to revegetate'?
- (2) If no to (1), will the Minister quote the full text from this note to file dated 7 February 2000?
- (3) Is it correct that the facsimile message dated 14 December 1995 from the DEP referred to above in part states, 'In your case, where you have ongoing seepage from the tailings dam but recover the seepage fully, we regard the recovery system as being part of the holding facilities. Hence you are not in breach of condition B1 unless or until the seepage recovery system fails to fully recover the seepage, resulting in discernible impairment. The fact that seepage did cause an increase in groundwater levels and resultant vegetation damage before the installation of a suitable recovery system means that you were in breach until the recovery system was shown to work.'?
- (4) If no to (3), will the Minister quote the full text from the facsimile message dated 14 December 1995 from the DEP?
- (5) Will the Minister table copies of the 'note to file' dated 7 February 2000 and the facsimile message dated 14 December 1995 from the DEP?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

- (1)-(6) The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has advised that the Kaltails facility has not been active for some years and the records relating to this facility have been archived and stored off-site. The period in question is more than seven years ago, and I do not support the substantial amount of time and resources it would take DEC to locate this information. There is also no evidence to suggest that there are any current impacts as a result of this facility and there are no active investigations into Newmont Kaltails in regard to seepage and/or impacts relating to the facility.