

SWAN COASTAL PLAIN - WATER-SOLUBLE FERTILISER USE

**806. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the minister representing the Minister for the Environment:**

I refer to the state government's proposal to phase out water-soluble fertilisers on the Swan coastal plain over the next four years.

- (1) Is the minister aware of any product that can be used as an effective alternative with regard to cost and quality of the fertiliser; if so, please give details?
- (2) Could the minister please detail the exact boundaries of the Swan coastal plain?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The Minister for the Environment has provided the following response -

- (1) There is a real need to phase out river-harming fertilisers in areas that affect rivers, estuaries and wetlands in the state's south west to assist in preventing excess nutrients entering our river systems. The swan coastal plain has sandy soils that do not retain nutrients well. Water-soluble fertilisers pass straight through them and into the ground water, which eventually ends up in our river systems, estuaries and wetlands. We are spending millions of dollars to address the symptoms of ill health on our waterways but we also need to address the cause. A range of low soluble fertiliser alternatives to current products have been investigated over many years by the fertiliser industry in conjunction with state and commonwealth government departments and with considerable government funding support. These investigations have shown that there is real potential for the introduction of new, environmentally safe alternatives and the fertiliser industry has indicated that it has no in-principle objection to their use. A high-level meeting has therefore been arranged between representatives of the fertiliser industry and the minister in early October to develop an effective way forward for a phase-out process through a collaborative approach.
- (2) The term Swan coastal plain is generally used to describe that part of south west Western Australia comprising low lying, gently undulating land covered largely by coastal dune, shoreline and alluvium deposits, and dominated by a mixture of woodlands, shrub lands and wetlands on sandy soils. In general terms, it extends approximately from Jurien in the north to Dunsborough in the south and is bounded by the Darling escarpment to the east and the coast to the west. For the purposes of a phase-out of water-soluble fertilisers, more precise geographical catchment definitions will need to be used. The intent is to develop these through a consultative and science-based process.