

WATER SUPPLIES, NITRATE LEVELS

486. Hon TOM STEPHENS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) What is the cost of installing in each of the Murchison towns equipment that is capable of reducing the nitrate levels in the water supplies to meet National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines?
- (2) Does the Water Corporation currently have an exemption from meeting these National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines?
- (3) If so, when was this exemption granted, and what was the basis for granting the exemption?
- (4) Will the minister instruct the Water Corporation to immediately install equipment to remove the high level of nitrates in these water supplies?
- (5) If not, why not?

Points of Order

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The Leader of the Opposition had in his hand a document from which he was reading. I request that the document be identified.

The PRESIDENT: At the conclusion of question time I intended to explain to members that Standing Order No 48 does not apply in question time. It applies to documents that are the subject of -

Hon MARK NEVILL: Mr President, should the Leader of the Opposition resume his seat when you are speaking?

The PRESIDENT: We are turning the place into kindergarten.

Hon MARK NEVILL: Absolutely.

The PRESIDENT: The Leader of the Opposition should take his seat. I am speaking at the moment, so the Leader of the Opposition is required to resume his seat.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: With due regard, Mr President, the standing orders require me to resume my seat if you are standing.

Ruling by the President

The PRESIDENT: Very well. If members are to deal with the standing orders in that way, the Leader of the Opposition should be prepared for me to apply the standing orders in that way. If that is what members want, that is what they will get. Standing Order No 48 does not apply to question time; it applies to documents that are being quoted by members during debate on a motion before the House. At the moment there is no motion before the House.

Questions Without Notice Resumed

Hon N.F. MOORE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question of some time ago.

- (1) No detailed estimates have been done but, as a guide, the cost of treatment for nitrate reduction at Cue, Meekatharra, Mt Magnet, Sandstone, Wiluna and Yalgoo is estimated to be in the order of \$10m capital.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The exemption was a longstanding arrangement with the Health Department of Western Australia, which was formalised on 1 January 1996 in the operating licence granted to the Water Corporation.
- (4) No, although I will discuss that with the minister.
- (5) The Health Department does not require the Water Corporation to treat for nitrate.