

INDUSTRIAL SITES REVIEW, GERALDTON

**1391. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

I refer the minister to the industrial sites review carried out by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and concluded in the Geraldton area.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that the recommendation of the review committee, which was given the task of assessing industrial sites in the Geraldton region, was that Oakajee remain the preferred industrial site in that area?
- (2) If so, why is the minister refusing to accept that recommendation, given that she appointed the committee?
- (3) Does the minister intend to make a habit of ignoring expert advice as a matter of political expediency?

**Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN replied:**

- (1)-(3) It is good to see the Opposition still wedded so closely to Oakajee. I do not know whether the Opposition is advocating that the Government should do just what it is instructed to do by its public servants and not take a role in decision making. In reality the buck stops with us. I have to admit that I am not yet convinced that the committee has got it right. Its job was to consider whether the extent of the landscape changes, given the infrastructure that we had put in place. Since the member's mob departed government, we have invested \$64 million in the Mt Magnet-Leinster road, \$88 million in the southern transport corridor and \$103 million in deepening the Geraldton port. Quite clearly those massive infrastructure investments must be taken into account in reviewing the most appropriate and most prospective locations for industrial development. I am not convinced that the report has adequately taken those matters into account. As the member for Greenough knows, the report recommended four sites that are available for general industry and heavy industry. We are now considering whether the report got it right and which is the most realistic position, given the amount of money that we have invested in transport infrastructure.

Some members are of the view that another project such as Kingstream Steel Ltd will want to invest in development at Oakajee. I have agreed with the Shire of Chapman Valley that the site will be zoned as a development site so that we will have the capacity to consider any proposal that comes forward. I have made it clear to the shire and to the member for Greenough that my reluctance to have the site zoned industrial at this stage is because there will then be an expectation that we will pour infrastructure into the site. We have made no commitment to pour infrastructure into the site, given the massive investment that we have made in the Geraldton port, which is a development zone that will allow any prospective developer to be confident that it can get approval for development on the site. However, we are conscious that we should not build up false expectations in the Government's infrastructure commitment to that area.