

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### Question On Notice

Wednesday, 12 October 2022

**1005. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Minister for Emergency Services representing the Minister for Environment**

I refer to question on notice 785 asked on 9 August 2022, and I ask:

- (a) is the Minister aware of the final report to the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management entitled “Nomination of Additional Ramsar Wetlands in Western Australia” by Roger Jaensch and Doug Watkins from Wetlands International – Oceania, dated March 1999;
- (b) is the Minister aware that this report is available to the public via the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) website;
- (c) is the Minister aware of table 11 on page 40 of this report which recommends that Lake MacLeod, Spearwood Creek Wetlands (Tributaries of the Lower Blackwood) and Cape Range Subterranean Waterways be nominated for Ramsar listing by May 1999;
- (d) will the Minister and WA Government act on this scientific advice and endorse Lake MacLeod, Spearwood Creek Wetlands (Tributaries of the Lower Blackwood) and Cape Range Subterranean Waterways for Ramsar nomination;
- (e) in response to question on notice 785, the Minister stated that no scientific advice was received by the Department regarding the nomination of the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways. Is the Minister aware the 1999 report provided to the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and published on the DBCA website provides detailed scientific advice on the Ramsar nomination of the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways and recommends their nomination (see table 11); and
- (f) will the Minister table summaries of consultation outcomes for Lake MacLeod and the Tributaries of the Lower Blackwood:
- (i) if no to (f), why not?

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#### Answer

- (a) I have been informed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) that further investigation has located this document in the DBCA library.
- (b) Yes.
- (c) Yes.
- (d) The scientific advice comprises one part of a Ramsar nomination. The Australian Ramsar Site Nomination Guidelines provide guidance on consultation. This includes obtaining in-principle support from site managers and landowners and broad consultation regarding the nomination and ongoing management with adjacent landowners, traditional owners, relevant Government departments, natural resource management bodies, community, and community interest groups.

Any new decision to further progress a Ramsar nomination would need to include contemporary scientific information and follow the Commonwealth Government's Australian Ramsar Site Nomination Guidelines.

(e) Yes.

(f) See tabled papers #.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a vertical line and a loop.

## **Summary of Consultation Outcomes for the Tributaries of the Lower Blackwood**

The process for a Ramsar nomination requires endorsement by the WA Government, then approval by the Australian Government prior to consideration by the International Ramsar Committee. The documentation and consultation required to support a nomination is significant. Each site requires a Ramsar Information Sheet with mapping, an ecological character description, a management plan, and a summary of consultative outcomes for the nomination.

The Tributaries of the Lower Blackwood River was identified as having sufficient ecological values to meet criteria for Ramsar nomination. The considerations in developing a Ramsar boundary definition were complex due to the variety of land tenures and ownership.

Targeted consultation was undertaken in the preparation of the Ecological Character Description (April 2010) and was used to inform the preparation of a Ramsar Information Sheet. A brochure was produced explaining the proposed Ramsar nomination and the values of the area, which was locally distributed seeking to gauge the extent of public interest. These consultation processes raised concerns that the Ramsar listing would limit or prohibit current and future land management activities. No further public consultation was undertaken, and a Ramsar Management Plan was not developed.

Local Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) staff continue to work collaboratively with landholders and stakeholders to manage the conservation values of the area.

## **Summary of Consultation Outcomes for Lake MacLeod**

### **Background**

The proposal to consider Lake MacLeod (northern part) for Ramsar listing was first identified in 1999. The matter was not progressed until 2004 following a series of other sites being listed in 2001.

Only the northern ponds of Lake MacLeod covering approximately 38,200 hectares, or about ¼ of the lakebed area was considered for listing as a Ramsar Wetland, as this area was identified as valuable waterbird habitat, with the remainder of the lake area considered to be a buffer zone.

The area proposed for listing and the entire buffer zone was unallocated Crown land subject to an evaporative salt mining lease held by Dampier Salt, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto.

The proposal was developed largely by Dampier Salt, who were keen lead on site management. This is a unique situation in Western Australia, as management responsibility in all other Ramsar sites is predominantly by State Government agencies.

A proposed management plan was developed by Dampier Salt and covered the proposed Ramsar site and buffer and could be extended to other lands, with the owner/manager's permission.

### **Consultation**

Preliminary consultation of the proposed Ramsar listing of Lake Macleod commenced two years prior to release of the Draft Management Plan for public comment and included face to face meetings with over 30 individuals or organisations.

The Draft Management Plan was released for a six-week public comment period from 5 September to 14 October 2005.

The public comment period was advertised in the public notices of the Northern Guardian, and an information brochure and the draft plan were available for viewing at the:

- Carnarvon public library;
- all of Dampier Salt Limited's sites (Perth, Carnarvon, Dampier and Port Hedland) and via their web page; and
- Carnarvon office of the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Hard copies of the information brochure and draft plan were delivered to over 40 individuals or organisations. Consultation was sought from local indigenous people including the Yamatji Land and Sea Council and the Gnulli working group.

A total of 17 written submissions were received. The number and origin of submissions are summarised below.

- Individuals (including pastoralists) - 3 submissions.

- Community or Sector Organisations - 5 submissions.
- Private Sector Businesses - 2 submissions.
- Government: Local and State - 6 submissions.
- Commonwealth - 1 submission.

Two organisations that provided written submissions opposed the listing nomination.

Following the consultation process, including formal consultation on the draft management plan, key concerns remained regarding the potential for the Ramsar listing to:

- impact on future resource development in the area;
- restrict current and future management of pastoral leases;
- increase visitation impacting on ecological values of the wetland; and
- imposition of management and financial obligations on land managers.

Concerns were also raised regarding the requirement for greater consultation with landholders in the broader catchment.

## **Outcome**

Following formal consultation, it was considered that overall support for Ramsar listing of Lake MacLeod was not obtained and the nomination was not progressed. DBCA has worked collaboratively with Dampier Salt, World Wildlife Fund and other key stakeholders on the development of a catchment management plan and a management advisory group was formed to progress implementation of the draft plan.

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