

VODAFONE EQUIPMENT HUT - LEEUWIN-NATURALISTE NATIONAL PARK

Statement by Minister for the Environment

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah - Minister for the Environment) [9.03 am]: On 13 December 2004, the then Department of Conservation and Land Management granted a lease to Vodafone Network Pty Ltd for the installation of an equipment hut adjacent to an established Telstra communication mast within the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. However, due to a procedural oversight by the department, a copy of the lease was not tabled in Parliament within 14 days of its execution, as was required under section 100(3) of the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. The Department of Environment and Conservation has investigated the circumstances surrounding this oversight. The oversight arose when the department varied its normal procedure by agreeing to a request from the lessee that the department execute the lease documents first and then forward them to the lessee for execution. As a result, the documents were not returned to the department due to staff movements within the department's property unit. The lease approval procedures have subsequently been tightened to require that lease documents are always executed by the lessee first and then by the department. The department is confident that this situation will not occur again. The lease approval checklist has been improved by making the lease execution step more prescriptive. A dedicated record of executed leases has also been introduced, and responsibility for monitoring this record and ensuring that leases are tabled in Parliament within the specified time frame has been assigned to a specified senior leasing officer. While it is regrettable that the lease was not tabled in Parliament within 14 sitting days of its date of execution, I am confident that appropriate remedial steps have been taken to address the situation. I now submit the lease for tabling in Parliament.

[See paper 3488.]