HYDRAULIC FRACTURING — SOUTH WEST BAN AND STATEWIDE MORATORIUM —
INQUIRY ESTABLISHMENT

Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [2.06 pm]: The government has fully implemented its election commitment to ban fracking for existing and future petroleum titles in the south west, Peel and Perth metropolitan regions. The government has also put in place a moratorium on the use of fracking throughout the rest of Western Australia. The ban and moratorium will be implemented through delegated legislation made under the Petroleum and Geothermal Resources Act 1967.

The government’s long-term position on the future of fracking outside the south west, Peel and Perth metropolitan regions will be informed by the recommendations of an independent scientific inquiry into fracking in Western Australia. The Minister for Environment has established a panel to lead this inquiry under section 25 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986. The inquiry will be undertaken by five scientists who are experts in their fields, including Dr Tom Hatton, who will chair the panel. The Public Sector Commission is finalising contractual arrangements with the inquiry experts. When this process in finished, their details will be available on the inquiry’s website—www.frackinginquiry.wa.gov.au.

The panel will use credible scientific and historical evidence to identify risks that fracking operations might impose on the environment, health, agriculture, heritage and Western Australian community. The panel will take full account of the extensive scientific literature and recent inquiries into fracking undertaken in Australia, and will provide the McGowan Labor government with scientifically rigorous conclusions and recommendations that will be bespoke for our unique Western Australian environment.

All Western Australians will be able to provide written submissions to the panel and attend community hearings that will be held in Perth, the mid west and the Kimberley. The government’s response to the conclusions and recommendations of the independent scientific inquiry will determine whether the moratorium becomes a permanent ban or whether the moratorium ends. As the McGowan Labor government’s ban on fracking in the south west, Peel and Perth metropolitan regions will remain in place after the inquiry, the panel will not be asked to consider risks imposed by fracking practices in these regions.

In conclusion, I am very happy to announce that the McGowan Labor government is fully delivering on its election commitment to implement a ban on fracking in the south west, Peel and Perth metropolitan regions, and to put in place a moratorium on the use of fracking throughout the rest of Western Australia pending the outcome of an independent scientific inquiry. In delivering on this commitment, this government has taken a responsible approach to ensure that we have access to scientifically robust, bespoke and independent advice necessary to make evidence-based policy on a matter that is of great importance to so many Western Australians.