

ENVIRONMENT - AMOUNT OF LAND AFFECTED BY SALINITY AND CLASSIFICATION OF
PRIVATELY OWNED LAND

2224. Mr M.J. Birney to the Minister for the Environment

- (1) What was the estimated number of hectares of land affected by salinity in Western Australia, as at the end of the last quarter?
- (2) In the last quarter, how many hectares of privately owned land were newly designated as -
 - (a) wetlands;
 - (b) environmentally significant areas; and
 - (c) how much was paid out in compensation to land owners for land designated as (a) and (b)?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1) There have been no recent calculations of the area affected by salinity. The Department of Agriculture, working with CSIRO, determined in 1998 that there was about one million hectares of severely salt affected land based on satellite imagery and ground truthing. In addition to this, work by the Department of Agriculture in 1994 estimated that there was about one million hectares of land that is moderately salt affected. This advice relates only to land affected by dryland salinity in the south-west of the State. These figures remain the current estimates.
- (2)
 - (a) No new wetland areas have been designated on privately owned land in the last quarter.

A total of 11 hectares of previously identified wetland areas on private property were re-evaluated to Conservation management category in the last quarter, and are therefore now designated as 'defined wetlands' under regulation (7)(c) of the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004.
 - (b) The question is taken to refer to 'environmentally sensitive areas' defined in the Environmental Protection (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) Notice 2005, for the purposes of section 51B of the Environmental Protection Act 1986, rather than the more generic term 'environmentally significant areas', which is not legally defined.

Under section 51B of the Environmental Protection Act 1986, the Minister may declare by notice either a specified area of the State or a class of areas of the State to be an environmentally sensitive area. There are currently ten classes of areas declared to be environmentally sensitive areas under the Environmental Protection (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) Notice 2005. Environmentally sensitive areas are determined at the time of the Notice coming into operation (2005), and hence no new environmentally sensitive areas have been determined in the last quarter.

A web-based GIS viewer is publicly available on the Department of Environment and Conservation's website which allows landholders to view environmentally sensitive areas by property location, street address or mining tenement. The website address is <http://www.nvp.environment.wa.gov.au>
 - (c) No compensation has been paid to landowners for land with designated wetlands on their property or other environmentally significant (sensitive) areas pursuant to the Environmental Protection Act 1986.