

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA LEVEL RISE

1902. Hon Jim Scott to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
Further to question without notice No. 34 of March 4 2004 regarding climate change and sea level rise -

- (1) Why did the Minister choose to use the Australian Institute of Engineers sea level rise figure of 0.38 metres and not the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change figure which suggests a sea level rise range of 0.33 to 1.1 metres with a most likely rise of 0.66 metres?
- (2) Is the Minister aware of why the WA Planning Commission is using the low figure of the Australian Institute Engineers and not the figure established by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change?
- (3) If so, will the minister detail the reasons?
- (4) Is the Minister further aware that the IPCC recommend that coastal zone managers evaluate impacts based on consideration of at least a 1 metre sea level rise scenario?
- (5) Has the Minister sought advice as to the level of liability faced by the State for not imposing the sea level rise scenario established by the IPCC?

Hon KEN TRAVERS replied:

- 1-3. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a committee of the United Nations Environment Program and World Meteorological Organisation.

It provides at regular intervals an assessment of the state of knowledge on climate change.

The Third Assessment Report, Climate Change 2001, built upon past assessments with the assistance of additional data from new studies and produced 40 future scenarios or world climate.

In the range of outputs from the 40 scenarios, global sea level rise is projected to rise by between 0.09 metres and 0.88 metres between 1990 and 2100. The range of 0.33 to 1.1 m with an average of 0.66m quoted by the Member is from the Second Report by the IPCC, now superseded by the Third Report.

The models produced a range of outputs, some of which are very conservative and others that are very exaggerated. These produced estimates that are the outer range of possibilities for climate change and resulting sea level rise. The middle range of scenarios are grouped as being 'the model average' scenarios.

The State Coastal SPP requires that setbacks to development be sufficient to accommodate sea level rise (amongst other factors relating to coastal processes). The figure for sea level rise was chosen from the middle of the IPCC "model average" scenarios and the middle figure (ie the mean of the median model) is used, that is: 0.38 metres. In the absence of more detailed sub-regional scenarios, one number is needed for the purposes of a State Policy and with the advice of the DPI Coastal Engineers it was decided that the mean of the median model was the most appropriate figure to use. It provides a reasonable allowance for future sea level changes without unreasonably penalising private landowners by imposing provisions related to extreme, and less likely, scenarios. This figure will be subject to constant review, as the knowledge on the subject improves.

- 4 No, this recommendation has not been sighted in the Third Assessment report. In any event, it is an unlikely recommendation, given that the IPCC is suggesting that the range of possible sea level rise in 100 years is 0.09 to 0.88 m.
- 5 Not relevant.