

MINING, NORTHERN GOLDFIELDS

977. Hon Tom Stephens to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs' answer on September 21 2000 referring to approvals given to mining in the northern goldfields and ask -

- (1) Were the consultations in relation to identifying and recording sites for protection under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* or to inform the Ngalia and Koara people of the section 18 applications and consult as to the potential impact/disturbance on each of the seventy sites?
- (2) Did the proponent and Aboriginal Affairs Department staff gain the support of Ngalia and Koara people for the section 18 applications?
- (3) What precautions have been taken to ensure the proposal to discharge hyper-saline water from the Cosmos Nickel Mine into Lake Miranda will not affect its environmental and cultural integrity?
- (4) Given that Aboriginal groups have now sought Federal intervention to protect the significant sites, why did the Minister override the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee's recommendations for further consultations between the parties?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE replied:

- (1) The consultations were to encourage further discussion on the section 18 application by representatives of the Ngalia and Koara groups.
- (2) The proponent had conducted consultation with the Ngalia and Koara people to ensure they were aware of the proposed project. It is not the role of the Aboriginal Affairs Department to gain the support of the Aboriginal community in relation to section 18 applications, but to ensure that consultation has occurred.
- (3) An environmental impact study resolved that the discharge of hypersaline water into Lake Miranda would have a negligible effect on the lake. In terms of the cultural integrity of the lake the discharge of water will not involve any ground disturbing works or any other major impacts on the site.
- (4) The Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee (ACMC) makes recommendations to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. In this instance the minister took into consideration the advice of the ACMC and the interests of the general community. In addition, I understand further consultations were conducted with representatives from the Ngalia Heritage Research Council, the Koara group and the Wutha group. These consultations were mediated by Ms Maureen Young, ACMC member for the goldfields region.