

RESOURCES INDUSTRY — SCARBOROUGH LNG PROJECT — FEDERAL COURT DECISION

739. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:

I refer to the recent decision by the Federal Court of Australia to reject the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority's approval for Woodside Energy to complete seismic work associated with the development of the Scarborough project. I also note industry concerns that the Federal Court's decision sets a precedent for ongoing easier challenges to mining projects based on similar grounds. What contact has the Premier had with the Prime Minister and/or the federal Minister for Resources to discuss this new threat to the resource industry in Western Australia, in particular the gas industry, to determine what urgent action needs to be taken in the federal Parliament to remove this threat to mining development and our state's gas industry?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I am not sure what the opposition has planned for me for the rest of question time, so in case this is my last question, I take the opportunity to wish everyone all the very best for the referendum on the weekend. That provides me with an opportunity to acknowledge the member for Central Wheatbelt and her position on this. She has our respect and great admiration for her position on this. I think the Nationals WA is all the poorer for not having her in the position of Leader of the Opposition.

The decision by the Federal Court is obviously very disappointing. It presents a significant challenge for industry. It relates to the capacity under legislation for the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority to provide a conditional licence subject to further consultation, which is what it did in this particular case, as the member would be aware. The Federal Court came to the view that under its legislation it did not have that capacity. This obviously represents a significant challenge for the industry.

Upon hearing of this particular decision, I immediately contacted the federal Minister for Resources; Northern Australia, Madeleine King. She shares my concerns I think it is fair to say. She was awaiting advice on what response the federal government should take, if any is required. Obviously, we were anxious about that. We would expect some response. Obviously, we will await, with some anticipation, the outcome of those considerations. I want to assure the member that I have been in touch with both industry and the federal government in relation to this matter and we are monitoring the situation very carefully.