

ABERNETHY ROAD-TONKIN HIGHWAY ON-RAMP

1791. Hon Jim Scott to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure  
Regarding the Minister's support for the Abernethy Road/Tonkin Highway on-ramp -

- (1) Was the Abernethy Road/Tonkin Highway on-ramp subject to a current triple bottom line analysis or is the Minister relying on an outdated 1997 Department of Transport report to justify the on-ramp?
- (2) If a current triple bottom line analysis has been done will the Minister please table a copy?
- (3) What alternative on-ramp locations were subject to a triple bottom line analysis?
- (4) Will the Minister table a copy of the triple bottom line analysis of the alternative on-ramp locations?
- (5) Why has the Minister ignored the potential impacts of Acid Sulphate Soils in the area of the proposed on-ramp?
- (6) Is the Minister aware that the WA Planning Commission bulletin No. 64, Acid Sulphate Soils, recommends against road and bridge building in areas of acid sulphate soils?
- (7) Does the area the Minister proposes as a land swap contain -
  - (a) declared or priority flora;
  - (b) threatened ecological communities; and
  - (c) conservation category wetlands,like that at the location of the proposed on-ramp?
- (8) Is the Minister aware that this on-ramp proposal is inconsistent with key Government policy statements relevant to conservation of wetlands in WA?

Hon KEN TRAVERS replied:

- (1)-(4) The Public Environmental Review (PER) document prepared for Main Roads in respect of the Abernethy Rd/Tonkin Hwy on-ramp project utilises current analysis and discusses the economic and social factors that justify the project as well as the environmental impacts.  
  
The PER document also outlines other available options for the on-ramp and discusses why they are not appropriate. I draw the Member's attention to the publicly available PER document which provides the analysis he seeks of the alternative on-ramp locations.
- (5) The PER addressed the issue of acid sulphate soils. The on-ramp and the drainage sump will not require excavation below the groundwater level. Consequently, acid sulphate soil is not an issue for this project. Dr Stephen Appleyard from the Department of Environment also confirmed that acid sulphate soils would not be an issue during the construction of the current proposal.
- (6) The WA Planning Commission's Bulletin No 64 does not "recommend against road and bridge building in areas of Acid Sulphate Soils." The only reference to roads and bridges within the bulletin is in Section 2.3 where it states "the types of development that may disturb acid sulphate soils typically involve large scale drainage and excavation works which expose these soils to air and may include infrastructure projects such as bridges, port facilities, flood gates, dams, dredging, railways and roads."  
  
Using the Bulletin's "Acid Test", no further Acid Sulphate Soils investigation is required as the project area:  
  
is above 5 mAHD (actually 19 mAHD);  
does not require dewatering; and  
does not require any excavation below 2m in depth.
- (7) Main Roads has made a commitment to providing an offset package to address the impacts associated with the construction of the on-ramp, if the on-ramp proposal is approved. Impacts to threatened flora and communities and Conservation category wetlands will be considered in regard to identifying a suitable offset package.  
  
The commitment made by Main Roads also states that the offset package has to be to the satisfaction of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, the Department of Environment and the Bush Forever Office.  
  
Furthermore, a Wetland Impact Mitigation approach has been developed and agreed between Main Roads and the Department of Environment. Impacts to wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain will be mitigated against in accordance with this approach.

- (8) If the on-ramp is constructed on the proposed alignment, the policies dealing with the conservation of wetlands will be properly considered during the preparation of the offset package. The suitability of the offset package will be assessed against relevant Government policies by government agencies, other than Main Roads.