

PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SOURCE AREAS FRAMEWORK

1235. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

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Given that the Water and Rivers Commission is charged with the responsibility for managing and protecting Western Australia's water resources, including public drinking water sources, I ask -

- (1) Is there a documented process for determining whether an area is a priority one, two or three area under the public drinking water source areas framework?
- (2) If so, can the minister specify the time frames for each stage in the process?
- (3) Will the minister table the documents specifying the process and time frames?
- (4) Will the Government provide the commission with funds to purchase land from land-holders who are prevented from carrying out their normal land-use activities due to the above policy to ensure the public's access to water?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has been advised by the Water and Rivers Commission that the commission uses an adaptive process that involves developing protection plans for source areas on an individual basis through a public consultation process. This process has variable time frames depending on the nature of the resource and the catchment area for that resource. The process has been developed over a number of years and involves direct consultation with landowners, local government authorities and other interested parties. The decision-making process for a particular piece of land is documented in a departmental draft water quality protection note. The commission is working towards a policy that will be consistent with the state water quality management strategy requirement to implement the national water quality guidelines for drinking water and other federal policies currently being developed for drinking water protection.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) See answer to part (1).
- (4) In designating priority classifications for drinking water source areas, the Water and Rivers Commission recognises existing land uses while maximising the protection of the drinking water resource. Accordingly, through the recognition of these land uses, normal land-use activities are not prevented. In the highest priority protection area, P1, the majority of land is owned by the Crown. When private land is identified in these areas, the commission has the option to purchase the land if the landowner chooses to sell and if funding is available to the commission.