

WATER QUALITY MONITORING, SOUTH WEST IRRIGATION AREA

126. Hon Jim Scott to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

- (1) Has the Department of Agriculture ever monitored the water quality at Water Point 29 where the Uduc Drain enters the Harvey Diversion/Myalup drain?
- (2) If yes, when has the monitoring taken place?
- (3) What pollutants or nutrients does the Department monitor?
- (4) Have any of the monitoring results revealed pollutant or nutrient levels above acceptable standards?
- (5) If yes, what were the pollutants or nutrients that exceeded acceptable standards?
- (6) Has the Department passed the water quality monitoring information onto any other organisation(s)?
- (7) If yes, which ones?
- (8) Will the Minister table the monitoring results carried out by the Department of Agriculture?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

- 1) The Department of Agriculture is undertaking an extensive, regional water quality monitoring program within the boundaries of the South West Irrigation Area. This water quality monitoring is completed under contract for South West Irrigation which is the "owner" of the data gathered through the monitoring. Monitoring point 29 is monitored as part of this program and is located on the Uduc Drain close to the intersection with the Harvey Diversion Drain.
- 2) Monitoring has taken place over the last two years and is scheduled for one more year before a full review of the results and monitoring program design. Water samples are collected weekly during the summer irrigation season and fortnightly during winter.
- 3) The Department monitors for the macro nutrients Nitrogen and Phosphorus (the water samples are analysed by the Marine and Freshwater Research Laboratory at Murdoch University) and for the major physico-chemical parameters of pH, turbidity and Electrical Conductivity. These physico-chemical parameters are analysed in-house by the Department of Agriculture.
- 4) Nutrient levels monitored in agricultural drains both in irrigation areas and in dryland regions are commonly found to be in excess of the water quality guidelines determined by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC). One of the aims of this monitoring is to measure impacts of best farming practice on reducing these levels.
- 5) The nutrients Nitrogen and Phosphorus have been found at monitoring point 29 in excess of the ANZECC guidelines.
- 6) Yes
- 7) The Department has passed this information on to South West Irrigation as part of contractual commitments and has informed the Department of Environmental Protection and the Water and Rivers Commission that some high levels of nutrients have been measured in this area.
- 8) South West Irrigation, the "owner" of the data collected through the monitoring program, have advised that the data is private information and have not agreed for the monitoring results to be made public.