

GERALDTON PORT AUTHORITY, DREDGING OF HARBOUR, LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

882. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

- (1) Is the minister aware of a claim against the Geraldton Port Authority regarding dredging of the channel and harbour?
- (2) If so, how much is the claim?
- (3) Will the port authority defend the claim?
- (4) Does the port authority have adequate funds to defend the claim?
- (5) If no to (4), will the Government assist?
- (6) Did the minister sign off on the adequacy of the technical detail prior to the tenders being called?

Hon KEN TRAVERS replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) No legal proceedings have been commenced. However, a dredging contractor - a Belgian-Dutch joint venture with Jan de Nul JV - has written alleging losses, including loss of profit, relating to the dredging contract. The contractor is claiming up to \$77 million - or alternatively \$49.5 million - from URS Australia Pty Ltd. The claim against the Geraldton Port Authority is in the alternative. Insofar as the claim is directed at the Geraldton Port Authority, it will be vigorously defended.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) Not applicable.
- (6) Although the minister is generally recognised as having many qualifications and capacities, expertise in geotechnical matters is not among them. However, the port authority has confirmed that representatives of likely tenderers, including Jan De Nul, were present during the necessary pre-tender geotechnical investigations that were carried out by the appropriately qualified consultants. That tenderer received a copy of the consultants' geotechnical report and was invited to seek further sampling, if it needed to, at the port authority's costs.