

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 245

asked on Wednesday, 28 April 2004

MR PEARCE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to claims made by the Deputy Opposition Leader that the Department of Natural Resources and Mines will not allow the amalgamation of water licences as a revenue raising measure—

Will he inform me about the facts of this matter?

ANSWER:

The fact is that my Department encourages licensees to amalgamate water licences wherever possible.

In fact, my Department has reduced the total number of water licences on issue by about 13,000 or about 25 per cent over the last two years.

This was achieved through licence amalgamation and other legislative initiatives of this Government that affect water licensing particularly in declared subartesian areas.

This major reduction involved amalgamating 4,500 licenses into just 1,000. As a result, revenue of around \$650,000 annually has been forgone.

Besides saving them money, these initiatives have reduced ongoing licence paperwork for licensees. There has also been savings to my Department through reduced administration.

My Department will continue to encourage licence amalgamation wherever appropriate. This will include continued dealings under the particular transitional arrangements provided under the *Water Act 2000* for certain licences originally granted under the repealed *Water Resources Act 1989*, as well as dealing with licensee initiated applications to amalgamate licences that do not fit these transitional arrangements.

Licensee initiated applications to amalgamate licences must be made and processed in accordance with specific provisions of the Act. My Department's decision on each application must have regard to specified criteria. These criteria relate fundamentally to the achievement of sustainable water allocation and management outcomes. The decisions are subject to statutory review and appeal arrangements provided under the Act. While proper resource management considerations might result in the refusal of a particular application, the statutory framework within which my Department makes its

decisions clearly leaves no opportunity for it to consider irrelevant matters such as licence fee revenue.