

Question on Notice

No. 1080

Asked on Wednesday, 13 September 2023

MR P WEIR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS (HON L LINARD)—

QUESTION:

With reference to hydraulic stimulation activities conducted by the petroleum sector—

Will the Minister (a) advise if there have been any instances of environmental contamination of land, air or water as a result of these activities and (b) if so, detail when and where this has occurred?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

The Department of Environment and Science undertakes both proactive and reactive compliance activities in relation to the petroleum and gas industry in Queensland.

The department has addressed a range of compliance matters associated with the petroleum and gas industry. These include unauthorised disturbance; unlawful release of coal seam gas water; and noncompliance with obligations to prepare particular documents, follow procedures or provide data (including in relation to hydraulic stimulation activities).

The enforcement response varies depending on the severity of the matter but may include issue of formal warnings, penalty infringement notices, environmental protection orders, clean up notices or prosecution.

The department has prosecuted petroleum and gas companies for not meeting their environmental obligations. For example, a company was fined \$60,000 in 2022 for two releases of coal seam gas water to land. The releases occurred following heavy rainfall events during February and March 2020 and resulted in increased soil salinity levels, adversely impacting soil and vegetation over an area of approximately 2,754m². A clean-up notice was issued to resolve the immediate impacts of the release.

The department has reviewed available compliance records for the period 2010 to 2023. The available data does not indicate that contamination events have been the sole or direct product of the act of hydraulic stimulation itself. It is important to note that there are a range of hydraulic fracturing techniques with different applications and carrying different environmental risks.

The department will continue to actively monitor compliance with environmental obligations by the petroleum and gas industry and take strong enforcement action.