



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation

Answer to Question on Notice: Far North West Joint Organisation

The question asked by Steph Cooke is listed below together with a response from the General Manager of Cobar Shire Peter Valtko who is also the secretary of the Cobar Water Board.

I think the response from Mr Vlatko indicates that there was the potential for mines to close if water shortages persisted.

I trust this response is sufficient.

Ms STEPH COOKE: I have a couple of questions. Firstly, what happened with mining operations during the last drought? Were they impacted? If so, was it due to a lack of water?

ROSS EARL: I can only just give you anecdotal evidence. It got to be a worrying stage for Cobar, I think, at the time. I don't think it overly adversely impacted as it was, but I think that there was some—like there was right across the west, as the water supply diminished, any large users were certainly looking at alternatives or how they might alter their work practices. The general manager of Cobar, who also looks after the Cobar Water Board, I'm sure, would be able to get an answer for that. If you'd like, we could get that to you directly, just what impact it had on the mines and what the potential impact would be. Given the fact that Cobar is heavily reliant on the mining industry for survival, I'm sure that any problems with the water would have a very huge detrimental effect on the economy of the town. But I'll get an answer through for you on that.

From Peter Valtko, General Manager of Cobar Shire Council:

It is important to understand that the mines have their own water licence for raw water which is delivered by the Cobar Water Board and not Council.

The first thing we need to know is that the mines and the Council loses around 50% of their licences due to the significant inefficiency of the water travelling around 70km from Warren through the Albert Priest channel and then the weir pool in the Bogan River and then another 130km in a pipeline to Cobar.

At the peak of the last drought the mines were required by Water NSW to reduce their licences by around 70% and potentially to 90% which was going to close the mines if this happened.

The mines did begin to introduce water conservation as a desperate measure which was not viable for the long run just to keep operating.

