

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio
Budget Senate Estimates
1 June 2010

Question: BR38
Topic: Ord River Irrigation Scheme – Stage 2 Development
Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

1. Have recent groundwater surveys been carried out by Geoscience Australia over the current estimated area of the Ord stage 2 development?
2. Did this survey identify the presence of perched salt stores in the Ord stage 2 area?
3. What area of the proposed new irrigated land is subject to the salt stores identified by Geoscience Australia?
4. What impact will the salt stores identified by Geoscience Australia have on development of the current Ord stage 2 area?

Answer:

1. In collaboration with CSIRO, Geoscience Australia undertook a study of groundwater in the existing Ord Irrigation Area Stage 1 and the Ord Irrigation Area Stage 2 areas, earmarked for potential irrigation expansion. The project was funded by the Australian and Western Australian Governments and managed by the Ord Irrigation Cooperative. Geoscience Australia provided its report to the Ord Irrigation Cooperative in February 2010 and the Cooperative released the report and supporting data in April 2010.
2. Yes.
3. Highly variable perched salt stores were mapped across the proposed new development area. Areas of relatively high salt stores (greater than 40 tonnes/hectare/metre) were mapped below parts of the Weaber Plain and Keep River Plains.
4. Although the report describes the stores in a way that can be used as input to studies of the implications for development, it only identifies a potential salinity hazard and does not address the implications for development directly.