

Estimates Committee 2005 Questions Taken On Notice

(23/06/2005 to 01/10/2005)

Date: 06/07/2005 Output: 3.0
Sub Output: 3.5
Subject: Natural Systems - Katherine Region

From: Mr Gerry Wood to Dr Christopher BURNS
Minister for Parks and Wildlife

Question: 7-5
Minister, your department successfully drilled and tested a high yield bore for Top Cat Pty Ltd to enable a multimillion dollar horticultural development to proceed in the Venn area of the Katherine region. Who drilled the bore, was it government or private? How much did it cost, and were there any land clearing approvals required for this horticultural development?

Answer:
Answered On: 13/07/2005
Answer: The question refers to drilling which was undertaken by the Government Drilling Rig, with completion in early 2003. The drilling was undertaken for Top Kat Fruits Pty Ltd at its Venn horticulture sub-division 20 km south of Katherine.

Total costs incurred and paid by Top Kat were \$173 000 for drilling, together with \$9000 for bore testing on the basis of commercial cost recovery rates.

The then Minister, the Hon Kon Vatskalis MLA, approved the use of the Government drilling rig on a full cost recovery basis. This followed a request from Top Kat, and advice from the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development regarding the urgent need for a water supply, and the inability of private sector drillers to undertake the geologically difficult work in the time frame required.

I reiterate advice previously given to the Member for Nelson that it is NT Government policy not to compete with the private sector, where it has the capacity to do the work.

Land clearing by Top Kat was lawful under conditions of Crown Lease Term 1870.