



MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

(House of Representatives Question No. 597)

Ms George asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, in writing, on 16 February 2005 —

- (1) Can the Minister outline the extent of the problem of coastal acid sulfate soils in Australia.
- (2) What action has the Government taken to address the problem.
- (3) Is the Minister aware that the Victorian Department of Primary Industries has identified acid sulfate soils in key development areas on Victoria's coast, in particular, on the Bass Coast at Venus Bay and Anderson's Inlet.
- (4) What action will the Federal Government take to ensure drainage or excavation work at popular coastal development sites, such as Venus Bay and Anderson's Inlet, does not cause significant negative environmental externalities for the indigenous ecosystem (such as disturbances in water quality) and to the built environment.
- (5) Are any species of flora or fauna located at Venus Bay and Anderson's Inlet listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- (6) Is the Government aware of any species of flora and fauna located at Venus Bay and Anderson's Inlet that potentially could be subject to the conservation provisions of the EPBC Act.
- (7) What action will the Federal Government take to ensure any species located at Venus Bay and Anderson's Inlet, already identified or potentially subject to the EPBC Act, are protected from the disruption of coastal acid sulfate soils.

Mr Truss – The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

- (1) Coastal acid sulfate soils are potentially located Australia-wide, however the problems associated with soil disturbance and discharge of acidic leachates are limited to areas of agricultural and urban development.
- (2) and (4) The Australian Government has pursued a range of measures to improve the community's awareness of coastal acid sulfate soils and to develop and demonstrate effective management strategies. This has been principally through (a) supporting the development of the National Strategy for the Management of Coastal Acid Sulfate Soils, (b) implementing under *Australia's Oceans Policy* the Coastal Acid Sulphate Soils Program, and (c) ensuring coastal acid sulphate soil management is addressed in Natural Heritage Trust regional natural resource