



# Granting of water licence condemned

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A move by the Department of Water to issue a short-term water licence to Karara Mining for 'infrastructure development' has been met with scepticism by opposing farmers in Mingenev.

The department's Mid West/Gascoyne manager Adam Maskew said granting the licence to assist construction of a water pipe did not mean that the company's other licence application to take 5,300,000kL/a would automatically be approved.

However, Karara's main most vocal opponent, farmer Peter Horwood, said it was an irreversible move and showed that the department was treating farmers with contempt.

"There is no going back now, they may as well just issue the license as far as I am concerned, they don't care," he said.

The department said a licence to take 90,000kL for construction and pressure-testing purposes has been granted to assist the mining company build a pipeline.

Mr Maskew said the department had made no guarantees on the 5,300,000kL/a application.

"This application is under assessment and a final decision to grant or refuse the licence is not expected to be made until June 2011," he said.

The construction licence, which

comes from the same water source in the Parmelia aquifer, expires on June 30 and cannot be renewed.

When work started on the pipeline last year a Karara spokesman said the company was confident of gaining a licence.

"We've proven the aquifer will be sustainable and we don't see any reason why it won't go ahead," he said.

A petition by Mr Horwood tabled in Parliament at the final sitting of 2010 by National Party MLC Mia Davies has reached the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

Committee chairman Mid West MLC Brian Ellis said he had received submissions from Mr Horwood and was now waiting on responses from the Minister for Water Bill Marmion and the department.

"If we are not satisfied with those responses, we may go back to the minister with further enquiries and if necessary, an inquiry will be launched into the matter to ensure the legitimate social concerns are addressed," Mr Ellis said.

Ms Davies and her National Party colleagues, including Greenough MLA Grant Woodhams, are expected to meet with Mr Marmion to discuss the issue.

Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance chief executive Rob Jefferies said this week that the mining industry was keen to

work with the Mid West community and local industry, including agriculture, and the Department of Water to work out a balanced and fair system of groundwater use.

He said the industry wants to avoid clashes similar to those between Karara Mining and several farmers in Mingenev, who launched a vitriolic protest against the miner's application to take the remaining water rights in the region's aquifer.

Farmers lodged their final submissions at the end of January and Ms Davies lodged a petition in Parliament.

Mr Maskew said the department would collate and review the submissions and issue a written response summarising issues raised and how they will be managed by the department.

"This will be followed by a meeting with the community to discuss this interim response," he said. "Depending on the issues raised, it would like to hold the meeting in March."

"The department is still reviewing Karara's hydro geological report, groundwater dependent ecosystem report and draft operating strategy, which includes its monitoring and reporting requirement. We expect to make a decision by June."



Pipe construction underway at the Karara mine site