

*Naturebank Program — Minister for Environment's Comments — Adjournment Debate*

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Earlier in question time the Minister for Environment, not exactly by way of interjection but as a preamble to a question with which some notice was given by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, welcomed what she saw as a positive attitude by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich to this new Naturebank program. The minister indicated, by way of an aside, that I had been very negative about it. I want to clarify my attitude to the Naturebank program and perhaps point the minister to a misunderstanding that she has about the nature of my comments.

I made three comments in my response to the announcement of the Naturebank program on Thursday, 8 October. Firstly, why would we trust the government when it comes out with a suggestion to free up the arrangements for putting developments into national parks? Secondly, DEC is sitting on a huge black hole in its budget and it is looking for a way of making money. Is this just a way to put some much-needed funds into its coffers? The third point I made related to the fact that there was no detail in this announcement. We were being asked to take on trust the announcement by the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Tourism that we would see more tourist accommodation development in national parks. I think I was being entirely reasonable when I made those three points. I wanted to start by saying that.

In no way do I, in particular, or the Labor Party in general want to stand in the way of sustainable development. In fact, as Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich pointed out by way of interjection, the government's Naturebank program was started by us in about 2002. There is no way that I am not supportive of the basic premise and the underlying philosophy of the Naturebank program. On several occasions over the years I have visited the Nanga Brook campsite outside Dwellingup. It is a fantastic place. It is a great place to take kids. In fact, I first discovered it when my son went there twice in successive years on a school camp and I stayed there. It is a very fine, if not slightly dated, example of how that kind of development in very sensitive areas can work really well. More recently some friends of mine spent time at the eco development outside Broome, which I think disappeared in a cyclone a few years ago.

**Hon Jon Ford:** It's been rebuilt now.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Yes, it has now been rebuilt. My friends had the most wonderful time there.

**Hon Donna Faragher:** Eco Beach.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Yes, that is the one. I thank the minister. All the reports were that these people were very clued up on environmental sensitivity. My friends came back with absolutely glowing reports. It can be done superbly well.

My point was: why would we trust this government? It has had two great brainwaves in recent months. One was to rescue the economy of Hopetoun after BHP pulled out by building a bitumen road through Fitzgerald River National Park. That went down like a lead balloon. I do not think the Minister for Environment was even consulted by the Premier before he announced that. She has not publicly expressed any reservations about that proposition, even though this is a dieback area. She must be worried about it. The second is the move by the Minister for Transport, presumably with the backing of the Minister for Environment, to drive a major highway through a pristine wetland. I am talking about the Beeliar wetlands and the government's proposal to extend Roe Highway. We found out only yesterday in question time in this place that this extensive survey on the highway that the government is spending millions of dollars carrying out in the south metropolitan area, the so-called community consultation, will not include a "no" option. What sort of community consultation is that? Talk about loading the questions! The community is being asked to involve itself in a consultation that does not enable it to say no. What a joke. That was my first question. Why would we trust the government and take this announcement at face value?

My second question is about the black hole in the middle of DEC's budget, which is getting larger by the day as far as we can make out. We will be able to tease this out in some detail when we eventually get to debate the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment Bill. I am concerned about departments being given a revenue stream that comes from activity that is basically antithetical to the core functions of those departments. As I have said, we will be able to tease this out in some detail when we talk about the government's plan to end the hypothecation to the waste account from the landfill levy.

What we have in this announcement is at least the possibility—I want to hear that it is not true—that DEC will be in charge of both the licensing and the regulation of leases in extremely vulnerable and sensitive environmental situations. DEC will not only be doing the regulating, but also it will be collecting the rents, at a time when it is desperately looking for money. There is a fundamental problem with that whole concept of program planning.

My third question is about the details. We do not really know who is going to do these assessments. There are some very fine examples in the world of world best practice principles. Not all my colleagues in the environment movement would agree with me, but I believe that the tourist development that is taking place in Yellowstone National Park in the United States of America provides us with an excellent example of world best practice principles.

What adds to my concern is the response from the Minister for Environment to the question asked today in question time by Hon Ljiljana Ravlich about Kurrajong, which is the first site that is to be developed under the Naturebank program. The question states, in part —

- (4) Was an environmental impact assessment undertaken for the site at Kurrajong?
- (5) If yes to (4), will the minister table that assessment; and, if not, why not?

The minister's response was that no environmental impact assessment has been undertaken for that site. I asked the government a week ago today—I think it was last Thursday—for details about how the Naturebank program is going to work, and I still am not getting answers to that

**Hon Donna Faragher:** Hello! I'm here!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Mr President, perhaps you would remind the minister that she does not have the call; I do. The minister has plenty of chances to do this. This is part of the original point that I made. Ministers have a lot of power. Give me my 10 minutes here. What we have heard today is that no environmental impact assessment has been carried out for the Kurrajong site. I have to say that it is now one week after this program was announced, and not one of my concerns has been allayed. I assure the member that I am not the only person on this side of the house who has these concerns. I will wait to hear whether the minister has a response to that.