

*Draft Waste Strategy — Adjournment Debate*

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [5.34 pm]: Today in question time the opposition asked the Minister for Environment a question. She was very pleased to receive this question because, unlike many of the questions we ask her, she actually knew the answer. The question that was asked by my colleague Hon Kate Doust was: “Has the minister released the draft waste strategy for Western Australia; and, if yes, when did the minister release the report, and in what form?” The minister was positively crowing at the fact that she knew the answer. The crucial thing is that we knew the answer as well. We do not often ask questions to which we do not know the answers. We knew the answer because I have had a copy of the document all week. Like the minister, last week I went to the Waste Management Association conference in Fremantle. When I got there on Friday, I found that the minister had been there earlier in the week. I will not say that she had “launched” the draft waste strategy; I do not know quite what the appropriate word is. She kind of snuck it out, but I cannot think of a term to describe what she did.

The minister stood up in question time today and answered a dorothy dix question from Hon Brian Ellis. She did a little skite about the number of ministerial statements she has made in the past 12 months and the number of appeals and approvals she has handled. The first question that occurred to me was whether she had done that as part of any sort of strategic management within her party, and the answer is clearly no. There she was saying how many approvals and appeals she had processed in the past year, yet some of her colleagues, in a discussion that she herself often joins, are going on about too much red tape, green tape and black tape, and all these logjams in the system. There she is getting up today and saying “I’ve done all this”, so we must ask what this stuff about needing fast-track systems is all about.

Much more serious than that was the point the minister made about the number of statements she has made over the past 12 months. She missed an opportunity this week. Why on earth did she not make a ministerial statement about the release of the waste strategy? We have been waiting for this document for months; it has been sitting on the minister’s desk. I have been asking her about it for months. Then I went down to Fremantle on Friday, and does anyone know where I found it? A little tiny thumb drive was provided to delegates at the conference and this document was on that little tiny thumb drive. I came back to Parliament House, went to my office, lobbed into the minister’s website and looked at the thousands of press releases that she has put out. Sometimes I get six a day, about all sorts of warm fuzzies. The website is the only place I ever see them, because they are never run in the media. Her office is probably running some sort of internal competition. Some people on our side might get a guernsey in that competition, but nobody in this house, I am happy to say. The minister is very happy to put out press releases about coffee table books and cute furry creatures that she gives name to, but there is nothing on the minister’s website about the state’s draft waste management strategy.

**Hon Ken Travers:** She told us today that she was keen to get our involvement.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Hon Ken Travers should not get too excited.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I am sure Hon Sally Talbot wants to get through her comments so that other members can have an opportunity to speak. She does not need to be interrupted, particularly by members of her own side.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Thank you, Mr President. I always welcome the enthusiasm of Hon Ken Travers, but I warn him not to get too excited, because this is what leads me to think that there is something very strange going on. All through this document it says not to try to contact the department before 1 October. I have a feeling that there is a bit of a slip-up there. Even the email address warns not to try emailing before 1 October. This is actually a pretty good document, and I commend it to members of this house. However, there is no link to the document on the minister’s website, there has been no press release about it, and she has not come into this place and made a ministerial statement.

I then went to the Department of Environment and Conservation website. As we know, the Department of Environment and Conservation has a big section devoted to waste. In fact, it has a very significant waste section. It is bigger than the Waste Authority’s website. I looked on the DEC website and there was nothing there. I typed in “Draft Waste Management Strategy for Western Australia” and found nothing. I then thought, “Let’s try again.” I cannot really hear what the minister is talking about, but I think she is trying to tell me that it is available on the Waste Authority website. Thank God for that is all I can say.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** The mystery deepens, but I am glad to be able to tell members where they can find a copy of this excellent document.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! All the interjections are out of order. If the member makes a remark in a way that does not invite interjections, there is every opportunity for me to enforce the standing orders. If the remarks are made in a way that is provocative and invites interjections, it becomes a little more difficult.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Thank you, Mr President.

In her question, Hon Kate Doust asked the minister when she had released it, and the minister carefully fudged the answer. The reason I suggest she did that was that on the day she released it, which I understand was a Wednesday, the minister was too unwell to come into Parliament and take up her parliamentary responsibilities, yet she was able to be in Fremantle doing something to do with getting this waste management strategy off her desk. I was a little surprised because on 29 June, the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations held a public hearing in which I played a part. I want to share with honourable members part of that discussion with Mr Barry Carbon, the chair of the Waste Authority. The dialogue goes like this —

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Is that draft strategy with the minister now?

**Mr Carbon:** Yes.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Do you know how long it has been with the minister?

**Mr Carbon:** It has been with the minister in different forms off and on for about three and a half months. The minister has asked us to consider having a package that covers whether the legislation goes one way or whether it goes another way, because some things interact with the legislative provisions that are in Parliament now.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** This is the legislation that will take at least 75 per cent of the money away from the waste account.

**Mr Carbon:** There are probably two or three parts of that strategy that it would potentially impact upon, depending upon what Parliament decides about that bill.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Is there going to be a plan B?

**Mr Carbon:** The minister has asked us to make sure, whichever way Parliament decides, that we can advise her promptly on what should be in that package.

I suggest that leaves us in no doubt that the minister wanted a plan A and a plan B, depending on what happened to the legislation in this house. As honourable members know, that bill arrived in this place this week. Last week when the minister announced the draft waste strategy, the bill was nowhere to be seen. We did not even really know about it in this house, as was pointed out to me. Yes, there was the minister, not launching, but letting the draft strategy go out, not for comment—not until 1 October—but there it was. I wonder what is going on here. It will be a long couple of weeks when we come back into this Parliament to debate this bill that is now in this house. One of the reasons for that is that nobody, but nobody, except the minister, supports what the government is trying to do with this bill. Recently the minister appeared on *Stateline* where she was questioned by Frances Bell, who asked —

...critics of yours on the Greens side of politics... say in your general role as Environment Minister that you're quite prepared to lay down and have Cabinet trample all over you. Is that the case?

The minister replied —

Well, I reject that. Every decision I make, I recognize that there'll be some people who like my decision and some people who don't like my decision...

I want to ask the minister: who likes that decision? Can I tell her what—I cannot find a single one. The minister went on to say —

...I can assure the people of Western Australia...that when I do make a decision, I make it based on very sound advice and very careful and considered consideration by me.

Given the fact that the minister made the decision to raise the levy by 300 per cent and to use that “extra” money to fund it—I use inverted comas because it is by no means extra money—what advice did she base her decision on?

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 5.44 pm*

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