

NINGALOO MARINE PARK — WHALE SHARK INTERACTION TOURS

**635. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to yesterday's question without notice 627 regarding whale shark interaction tours.

- (1) Who are the external stakeholders involved in conducting the review?
- (2) Why was a review of the vacant licence not commenced until 17 October 2011?
- (3) What is the review reviewing if it is operating without terms of reference?
- (4) Which specific recommendation of the review of nature-based tourism triggered the performance review of all licences?
- (5) Who conducted those performance reviews?
- (6) How were the performance reviews conducted?
- (7) How and when were licence holders informed about the performance reviews?
- (8) What criteria were set for evaluating which licence holders had performed to a high level and who determined these criteria?

**Hon HELEN MORTON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The external stakeholders being consulted during the review of wildlife management program 27, which includes the review of the vacant licence, are: existing whale shark licence holders; the Shires of Exmouth and Carnarvon; the Gascoyne Development Commission; the North West Cape Exmouth Aboriginal Corporation; the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation; the regional tourism organisation Australia's Coral Coast; ECOCEAN; the Australian Institute of Marine Science; Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute; and the Cape Conservation Group.
- (2) The then Minister for the Environment approved a recommendation in January 2008 that the vacant licence be reconsidered after a period of three years. October 2011 was the end of the third season of this three-year period.
- (3) It is reviewing and updating the wildlife management program.
- (4) Recommendation 6.
- (5) The Department of Environment and Conservation.
- (6) DEC reviewed operational and sustainability condition performance.
- (7) All licensed commercial operators, including whale shark licence holders, were sent a letter and brochure advising of the outcomes of the review of nature-based tourism on 7 December 2011, including that E-class or restricted licences would be reviewed on a performance basis and extended to 10 years from their original date of issue. All whale shark licence holders were sent an additional letter advising them of the review of nature-based tourism on 21 December 2011.
- (8) The evaluation was based on a review of performance against licence conditions, which included operational and sustainability conditions as determined by DEC.