

WA ENVIRONMENT AWARDS — CANCELLATION

387. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the cancellation of this year's WA environment awards, for which the minister personally called for submissions when he launched the awards on World Environment Day on 5 June, and the subsequent review of these awards that he has put in place.

- (1) Why did the minister personally open the nominations for these awards when he had every intention of cancelling them even before nominations were to close?
- (2) Why have these awards been placed under review using the justification of the splitting of the Department of Environment and Conservation into two new departments when he knew at the election that he would split the department?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

- (1)–(2) I might send the member for Gosnells a copy of the release that the Department of Environment Regulation put out about that.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: About cancelling the awards?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Exactly—about what the member has termed “cancelling the awards”. The awards have not been cancelled; the awards have in fact been postponed.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Everybody wants to have a really good laugh about it. Yes, we did open the awards. As was stated first and foremost in that release, we have postponed the awards. I believe that we need to look at what we are doing with the environmental awards program. Indeed, I have had letters from very significant, respected organisations representing environmental groups in this state that found that the previous environmental awards were increasingly out of their reach.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr A.P. JACOB: The awards were run effectively as a five star-type program. As has been indicated, private sector sponsors subsequently fell through, so we looked at the internal budgets of the Department of Environment Regulation and the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This event was going to cost taxpayers around \$100 000 for one dinner. Does the member think that \$100 000 for one dinner is a justified use of taxpayers' money in the environment portfolio?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! Minister, can you answer the question, or I will allow a supplementary?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will take a supplementary, Mr Speaker.