

SWAN AND CANNING RIVERS — AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT

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

I also refer to the Auditor General's report into the health of the Swan and Canning Rivers that was released yesterday that had such scathing criticism of this government's mismanagement of these vital waterways.

- (1) Why has the minister's office sat on the river protection strategy for two years when every agency had signed off on it and it had been submitted to the minister twice?
- (2) Will the minister now release this river protection strategy?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

(1)–(2) Mr Speaker —

Mr J. Norberger interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup, I call you to order for the second and third times. Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the first time.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to hear anybody now.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Out of the 11 recommendations that the Auditor General brought down, I am only too happy to address the matter of the river protection strategy. Let me first of all say that it is not the case that the Swan River Trust has currently been acting within a vacuum. It has already been operating under a range of strategies including —

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Why would you sit on that for so long?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will get to that.

The SPEAKER: I will give the member for Gosnells a chance to ask a supplementary question. I am not prepared to have this constant shouting across the chamber.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It has not been operating in a vacuum without any strategy or plan to this point. The Auditor General's report noted the plans the Swan River Trust is currently acting under, including the "Swan-Canning Cleanup Program", the "Healthy Rivers Action Plan", the "Swan Canning Water Quality Improvement Plan" and the "Better Urban Water Management" guidelines of 2008. It is already operating under four current plans.

Dealing specifically with the river protection strategy, I acknowledge that that is a requirement. We will deliver a river protection strategy post its merger with the Department of Parks and Wildlife. As to the specific draft river protection strategy that the member for Gosnells referred to, perhaps he should have read on a little further in the report because the Auditor General's comments found that that draft, and most of its other plans, did not prioritise the key threats facing the river system or the actions that would most improve its long-term health. Although the Auditor General has found that we need a river protection strategy, I recently brought an amendment to the bill through this house. I deliberately left that clause in because I acknowledge that we need a river protection strategy, and we will deliver one. The draft that the member refers to, even within the Auditor General's own report, was found to have not adequately identified the key threats. We will deliver an amended river protection strategy following the Swan River Trust's merger with the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time.