

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO — GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

Motion

Resumed from 17 August on the following motion moved by Hon Simon O'Brien —

That this house congratulates the Liberal–National government on its excellent performance in the environment portfolio.

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan) [1.07 pm]: I will reiterate some of the points I made last week, only because, in the context of what I have yet to say, these things need to be balanced. I want to make sure that people are clear that we are congratulating the Liberal–National government on its excellent performance in the environment portfolio and I am concerned that the opposition could not find anything on which to congratulate the government. I spoke about the balanced agenda across economic, social and environmental initiatives and the investment, resources and successes achieved in those areas. I also spoke about the massive initiative, the extent of which has never before been seen in this state in the environment area: the three new national parks, one of which I will talk more about shortly; the four new marine parks and three more being progressed; the 200 per cent increase in the state's marine park reserves; and, over and above that, the fact that we are now creating Australia's largest national park at the Mitchell Plateau. I also mentioned that the Kimberley science and conservation strategy is the largest conservation project ever undertaken in WA—a \$103 million investment. Despite that, the opposition still interjected and suggested that it still could not find anything on which to congratulate the government in the environment portfolio.

I talked about improvements in the Conservation and Land Management Act; the introduction of the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015; the thousand-fold increase for much stiffer penalties for smuggling sandalwood; the strengthened management of the Swan River; the \$21 million initiative to deliver 450 new camps and caravan sites; the massive investment to protect the health of the Swan Canning Riverpark; and the heaps of examples, of which I will give more, of the success in protecting and recovering the state's threatened species. I went on to mention the 55 per cent reduction in foxes in baited areas in my neck of the woods, around Wandering and Pingelly, and the green growth plan that is committed to establish 170 000 hectares of new conservation areas in the Perth and Peel region—the largest expansion of reserves ever undertaken around a capital city. Still, the opposition cannot commend the government, or so it says.

That is not all. The government has huge multimillion-dollar incentive programs to reduce landfill and increase recycling, including this week's and last week's initiative around getting money back for returning cans and bottles—I cannot remember what that is called. A heap of things are going on at the moment for which I am sure the opposition could commend the government. But this is an opposition that is always ready to condemn the government; it does not have the ability to commend the Liberal government for anything. I want to give the opposition one more chance; it has one more shot to vote for this motion. I will talk about what has been achieved at Dirk Hartog Island National Park.

For those members who are unaware, Dirk Hartog Island National Park became a national park in 2009 and is located within the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. It is about 80 kilometres long and between three and 15 kilometres wide, and covers 620 square kilometres. It is the most westerly aspect of Western Australia, and of the whole of Australia. Allan and I visited the island for one week in July this year and we were able to see what is being progressed on the island. We stayed at the Eco Lodge, which is owned and operated by Kieran and Tory Wardle. I would like to mention that Kieran and Tory Wardle are guests in the President's gallery at the moment. Our interest in visiting the island was threefold. First of all, most people understand the history of Dirk Hartog Island and that this is the 400-year commemoration of the discovery of the island by Dirk Hartog. The government has provided a significant amount of funding to make sure that that celebration is done appropriately. We wanted to get to the island to have a look at it, given this is such a significant year in its history. Secondly, most members would know that the island used to be a sheep station. Allan had passed up a number of opportunities to shear there and had always regretted not visiting, and we wanted to see what the island was like and whether the sheep shearing history on the island continued to hold an interest for us. For those members who are not aware, the first leasehold was taken up on the island in 1907. Its history as a sheep station is still evident. The original shearing shed remains. I have photos of Allan standing in front of the old wool press. The engines that drove the overhead gears are still there, and a pair of moccasins is hanging up in the shearing shed. A lot of history around the early shearing processes is still evident. When we were shown to our room at the Eco Lodge, we were really taken to see that the names of the rooms are the stencils used for the bales of wool. We were not very happy about being in "Pieces"; we really wanted "3 am"! We were really quite happy with "Pieces"; it was an excellent room. We were able to visit a number of the watering points—the mills and wells across the island that had made this a functional sheep station.

Extract from *Hansard*

[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 24 August 2016]

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Hon Helen Morton; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon Simon O'Brien

As I said, the leasehold was taken up in 1907 and by 1909 there were 20 000 sheep on the island and it was running as a fully operational sheep station. A lot of members will know that in 1969 the island was purchased by Sir Thomas Wardle, who had been the Lord Mayor of Perth. Those members of my vintage would know him as the owner and operator of Tom the Cheap, a chain of grocery shops across Western Australia; in fact, Tom the Cheap did go interstate, because at one stage my husband had some dealings with them in Canberra.

Negotiations with the government led to the removal of most of the sheep and goats from around 2007 onwards and it became a national park in 2009, with further sheep, goats and other feral animals being removed. The negotiations also ensured that the Wardle family retained a sizeable freehold landholding on the island, on which the Eco Lodge is located.

We wanted to see the effect of the government's program to re-establish the island's natural, cultural and World Heritage values, which are in abundance. The aim of the Department of Parks and Wildlife is to restore the vegetation habitats on the island to how Dirk Hartog would have seen them in 1616. Members could imagine the effect on the vegetation from 20 000 sheep, 10 000 goats, feral cats and all sorts of other animals roaming the island for the number of years that they did. The vegetation had been reduced significantly for native animals. In fact, 10 species of small mammals and marsupials did not survive those changes. They are the western barred bandicoot, chuditch, mulgara, dibbler, greater stick-nest rat, desert mouse, Shark Bay mouse, heath mouse, woylie and boodie. It is thought there were also two other species, which I will mention in a few minutes. The sheep and goats have gone and it appears that the cats have also been removed through some of the most extensive feral animal eradication ever attempted in Australia. Thirteen aerial shooting campaigns have seen the removal of over 7 441 goats. It is hard to imagine that those goats bred from just a couple of house goats that were obviously brought there for milk, but as is the breeding habit of goats, they became near on 10 000 goats at one stage. Weed management, vegetation restoration and fire management will enable the 10 species I listed earlier, and the other two I referred to—the rufous hare-wallaby and the banded hare-wallaby—to be reintroduced onto the island.

A cat-proof fence was constructed across the island to assist the successful cat eradication program. To be honest, the biggest challenge in restoring the island to the pristine natural state it is now in has been the eradication of cats. Aerial baiting of cats took place in 2014 and 2015 and a network of monitoring tracks has been installed for detection and monitoring of the cats. In recent times, only one set of cat tracks has been detected. The objective is to have the island cat-free by 2018. It would appear that the Department of Parks and Wildlife is on track to achieve that, but monitoring will continue for another two years after the last sign of a cat has been found. While we were there, we saw dogs that detect any traces of cats over rocky sites where camera tracking and other detection apparatus is unsuitable. We were quite surprised to see the dogs. They are used only at night-time, and we saw them in the daytime, in cages. They are used to follow the scent of a cat to find whether any cats are there.

Surveys for introduced black rats have been conducted and so far none have been detected on the island or the nearby mainland areas of Denham, Useless Loop and Monkey Mia.

Vegetation monitoring using remote sensing, annual weed surveillance and control, and monitoring surveys of three threatened bird and one threatened reptile species are ongoing. The Minister for Environment indicated that this initiative would not have been achieved without the close cooperation of Kieran and Tory Wardle on the island.

What a great week we had while we were up there. It was terrific to visit the island and to have the chance to meet our three objectives—to look at the island during its 400-year commemoration, to get a sense of the history and feel for the shearing that used to take place there and to see the restoration efforts that are enabling the island to return to its natural state. Our three objectives were met, plus much more. We had this great week, and it is thanks very much to our hosts—Kieran and Tory, and Kieran's brother Nick Wardle. The Wardles are the only people who live on the island, but they frequently operate as fly in, fly out operators as they have three children—William, Oliver and Sanchia, aged between seven and 13 at school here in Perth.

We flew to the island and landed on a small airstrip. We did not take a four-wheel drive with us up there, although people can drive a four-wheel drive onto a barge and get onto the island that way. People can take a campervan onto the island as long as they have prearranged camping permits. From a long way away we drove past people who were camping in very isolated areas. The people camping on the beach at some of the places we drove past must have thought that they were the only people in the world.

The only concern I found in the time that I was there is the amount of formal administrative work that the Wardle family undertakes for the growing number of people going to the island. They make the bookings et cetera without any recompense from the Department of Parks and Wildlife. I think the minister might need to look into that.

We hired a four-wheel drive vehicle for one day on the island and explored the southern end of the island and saw the blowholes and beautiful beaches down that way. Over the two days, I took photos and decided to see how many wildflowers I could capture on my iPhone. Members will see the card I have given them. Each person has a card on their desk of just some of the wildflowers I captured.

Hon Peter Katsambanis: It is you we can thank for this lovely card.

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is absolutely me you can thank. On the back, it mentions that the photos are photos that I took.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I got two. Does that mean you really like me?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I do. Especially if the member votes to congratulate the government for the work it is doing on Dirk Hartog Island.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I congratulate you on your photographs; that is the extent of my congratulations for today!

Hon HELEN MORTON: That is very good. The large photo on the front is the wild hibiscus that grows on the island. I now have to talk to Kieran and Tori about whether it can be put into champagne.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Could this be a career post-politics?

Hon HELEN MORTON: We never know; if I am good enough at it, it could be. We had a great time on our day when we hired a four-wheel drive. We drove up and down sand dunes that I did not know a four-wheel drive could get up and down, even with the air let out of the tyres. I was very nervous, but at the same time it was really quite exciting and very enjoyable.

We went out on a boat and saw the cormorant nesting colony, the loggerhead sea turtles and the large sea eagles nesting on the island in a really protected environment. One day we travelled 80 kilometres to the other end of the island to Cape Inscription where the lighthouse and the old lighthouse keeper's residence have been restored beautifully by the government as part of this process. We could see whales breaching off the end of Cape Inscription. We could not ask for anything better in the way of a holiday. We travelled with Tori and Kieran up there because—guess what—they were starring in an advertisement being made for pizzas. Some people might have seen that on social media. A company had flown in about 30 extras, most of them from the eastern states, and had a pop-up restaurant on the verandah of the lighthouse keeper's residence. For the day of filming, the company pretended to operate it as a pizza restaurant. That is part of the advertisement that Tori and Kieran were starring in, very reluctantly, I might add. They were starring in it because the people wanted to film the most westerly part of the nation and show that these pizzas were available in that area. I might add that it was the first time that I had seen a drone used for filming and I have decided that I must buy one out of my electorate account so that I can do some more filming for the campaign and other important things that we have to take pictures of that we cannot quite get to.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: We do not get enough to buy a drone.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I have worked out that they are not as expensive as members might think. We went walking on a number of occasions across some really beautiful white beaches, peered very cautiously over edges of cliffs and clamoured on rocky surrounds. One of the special things about this island is that it does not have all the normal restrictions that tourist facilities usually have. There are no guardrails around the cliff edges, for example. We really have to take responsibility for our own safety. Being on an island where we could exercise that responsibility ourselves gave us a great sense of freedom and joy. When I went to the blowholes, I really wanted to get closer and closer, but knowing that those cliffs have had many, many years of water surging underneath them and will eventually erode, I did not know how far I could venture before I would crack the rock, so I did not go too far.

On the island, we saw wetlands and mangroves and one snake and some crabs. We made little discoveries all the time on the island; it was fantastic. Coming from a sheep station ourselves, we knew that over the years the property had been overstocked and the vegetation had been eroded as a result. It was really impressive to see the regeneration that has taken place since the stock has been off that property for probably about six years. The shrubbery and the bushes were really lush and it was wonderful. We kept thinking to ourselves that sheep would go well on this property, but I understand that is obviously not the purpose of that property anymore. We enjoyed that lack of normal tourist restrictions and the barriers that I was mentioning. I also have to tell members that Tori is a great gourmet cook and we had a superb menu of beautifully cooked meals and picnic lunches prepared every day. If members do not want to see anything else on Dirk Hartog Island, that is something worth going for.

The opposition continues to say that there is nothing to congratulate the government for in the environment portfolio. Perhaps the opposition can vote positively for this initiative on Dirk Hartog Island and the wonderful and really successful operational partnership that has been achieved between the people who live on the island—

the Wardles—and the Department of Parks and Wildlife. The government ought to be congratulated for the eradication programs that have allowed the natural habitat to be restored.

I commend the motion to the house.

HON ALYSSA HAYDEN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.27 pm]: I, too, rise today to join my colleagues in congratulating Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this important motion before the house and also to congratulate our government on our achievements in the environment portfolio.

This motion has given us a unique opportunity. Traditionally, the general public and even those on the other side seem to be under the misconception that the only political parties that care about the environment are ones that sit to the left. But this motion is giving us the opportunity to show the community and set the record straight that it is those who sit on this side to the right of politics who have invested and spent far more time and money on protecting the environment. I would like to call us all environmentalists on this side and not filibusterers like those on the other side. The shame is, unfortunately, that a lot of the community does not tune in and watch our extremely important and informative speeches in this place, but if they did, they would learn to understand that the Liberal–National government is not anti-environment; we all cherish, value and, most importantly, put in the infrastructure and the money and the investment to protect it.

I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for giving us the opportunity to let the community know that Liberal–National government members are the real environmentalists, not our partners in politics on the left side of the chamber. The government has been in power for near on eight years. For eight years prior to that, under the Labor government, all we had was a talkfest on the environment portfolio. My colleagues in this place have already highlighted that in their speeches before me. We need to hit home and remind everybody that for the eight years that Labor was in government, on the ground in the environment portfolio it delivered zero. It talked and talked for five years before releasing an indicative management plan; it did nothing but talk about it. It just got people around the table and formed committees—I am sure tea and sandwiches were brought in—to talk further about the environment. After eight years of creating a plan, it delivered nothing. Governments can talk and have committee meetings, they can go out and visit and investigate, but unless they deliver, they are doing nothing for the environment in Western Australia.

Labor is yet to support listing threatened ecological communities—it is silent in that space—and it still has not supported the protection of critical habitat. Again, it is silent in that space. In hindsight, as we draw close to an election, maybe the Greens should reconsider where they send their preference vote, because if they send it to the Labor Party because they think it is on the same path as them in protecting the environment, they could not be further from the truth. Greens members should look at the way they can actually send their preference vote to a party that does care about the environment and acts and delivers on it. As a proven track record for the past seven and a half years, the government has been able to do that. My challenge is out to the Greens party that it should reconsider where it sends its preferences on election day.

That is enough of the negativity. We on this side do not like to focus on that for too long. We are doers; we act and we like to achieve. I turn to the protection of the Swan and Canning Rivers. I had the privilege of being out again this morning with Hon Albert Jacob, who was in the East Metropolitan Region only a week and a half ago, announcing more funds to restore the riverbanks along the Swan River. This morning we were at Lilac Hill Park in Guildford, opposite Woodbridge, where we were able to announce yet further funding from this government above all the other funding in the budget to assist with the development and protection of our riverbanks. We all know that it is vitally important that we protect our rivers. Our rivers support an abundance of fish species, native animals—fauna—and plants. The management of our river system requires ongoing effort and management. Since 2008 this government has invested \$9.2 million into more than 156 river restoration projects and more than \$5 million into nutrient-stripping wetlands. That is the government putting its money where its mouth is. People talk about having to fix the rivers, but this government actually puts the action into place; we take the necessary steps and we move forward and deliver. Under this government, 156 river restoration projects have been achieved since 2008.

Another \$3 million over three years has been allocated to the priority of foreshore projects along the Swan Canning Riverbank to ensure that the river is as healthy as possible so it can continue to support the animal, plant and fish species that live among that river place. The Ellen Brook and Bayswater catchments have been included. The government has upgraded oxygenation plants in both the Canning and Swan Rivers and has invested more than \$12 million into programs. That has been matched by local government authorities to ensure that government invested in over 148 projects, delivering \$24 million into improving the health of the Swan and Canning Rivers. I congratulate the local government authorities that have entered into a partnership with the Liberal–National state government to ensure that the Swan River is protected so that their communities can enjoy it. It is one thing to protect the environment, but we also need to enjoy it. If people are not out enjoying the environment and do not understand its importance and its value, obviously it gets put on the backburner and it

does not get the attention it so deserves. By keeping people active and engaged in the environment, be it the river, the Karri Valley forest or the Bibbulmun Track, they understand and appreciate the importance of our bushland, tracks and waterways.

Today I want to acknowledge the contribution of the City of Swan to restoring the Swan River from Guildford through to Midland. As I said, I met with Hon Albert Jacob this morning, bright and early. It was nice and brisk by the river this morning, I must admit! Today he announced a further \$2 million for Perth foreshore restoration projects for 2016–17. This is delivering on a commitment that the government made at the last election in 2013. On top of that \$2 million, an additional \$1 million was announced today to fund priority projects that have been negotiated with local councils. Two of those priority projects are at Southern River in the City of Gosnells and Woodbridge Riverside Park in the City of Swan. As an East Metropolitan Region member, I am delighted to see that our local councils are working with this government to make sure that they can secure a healthy river and environment for the community to enjoy.

An amount of \$22 375 will go towards the revegetation of a 600-metre length of the riverbank at Lilac Hill Park in Guildford. This will link with previous revegetation areas that the City of Swan has engaged in over the past four to five years. A couple of years ago, Hon Donna Faragher and I went out with the mayor at the time, Charlie Zannino, and congratulated the City of Swan for investing in and progressing the safety of the environment of the Swan River. That revegetation will link together all the work that has been done along the river. It will be the longest stretch along any river within the metropolitan region that will be totally revegetated. That is thanks to the work of the Town of Bassendean and City of Swan to ensure that the river is protected and the continuity of restoration is assured. Enjoying that stretch of the Swan River is a favourite pastime for not only local residents but also the Perth metropolitan community at large. Many recreational boats travel along the river to visit the Swan Valley, Woodbridge or Guildford, so it is vital that we ensure that those riverbanks are protected from the wash of those boats. As I said, the government does not want to stop people from being on the river—we want people to enjoy it—but this government is making sure that the river is protected so that people can enjoy it and that the environment will not be affected or pay the price of being neglected, as it was previously under a Labor government.

I believe a total of 15 projects were announced by the Minister for Environment today, eight of which sit in the East Metropolitan Region. The City of Armadale has received \$34 480 for revegetation and weed control in the reserve along the Araluen walk trail and another \$34 608 for the Rushton Park rehabilitation stage 2. The City of Armadale has shown that it cares about the environment and has worked with the government over a long period to ensure that we deliver on restoring our rivers and making them enjoyable for everybody. The City of Armadale, the Town of Bassendean, the City of Gosnells and the City of Swan have all worked successfully with this Liberal government to ensure that we deliver for the environment, within the East Metropolitan Region alone. The other projects out of the 15 that I should commend as well are the City of Fremantle, City of Nedlands, Shire of Peppermint Grove, City of Perth, Town of Victoria Park and City of Vincent. That shows that this government can work across all levels of government with all different jurisdictions to improve our environment for everybody to enjoy.

Since 2008, this government has delivered, excluding today's announcement, \$14 million to protect our foreshores and riverbanks. That is nothing to be sneezed at. It is something about which we should stand, loud and proud, and it goes to the message that I mentioned earlier that we, as a government, need to continue to put out there that our party will protect the environment. We are on the side of politics that does not just talk, but cares and delivers.

The impact of the environment on our tourism sector is often dismissed by many people as a bit lighthearted. Everyone on this side understands the importance of tourism to the Western Australian economy. Our Premier took on the tourism portfolio to make sure that that message reaches every portfolio that sits under government. Tourism does not come under just one portfolio. If every portfolio is not focused on and delivering to support our tourism economy, we will not achieve the goal that we have set for 2020 to increase the tourist income and visitation to WA. Having taken on the tourism portfolio, the Premier has been able to stress in particular to the Department of Parks and Wildlife the importance of investment in our national parks, marine parks, caravan and camping facilities, and roadside rest areas to ensure that we deliver a fantastic experience and a wonderful local family holiday at affordable prices. Again, the community perception is that the Liberal Party side of politics does not always look after those who want an affordable holiday. Let me tell you, Mr President, that this Liberal government understands how to deliver affordability to the community of WA to allow them to enjoy their backyard without having to pay huge prices to stay at a hotel or the like.

Everyone in this chamber would have got up this morning and checked out our magnificent blue sky and breathed in our fantastic fresh air. Those lucky enough to live along the coast would have seen our beautiful white beaches and blue water. I am extremely privileged to live close to the river so I get to see the magnificent river in the morning. What we take for granted every single day of our lives—the environment we live in, the

clean air and the diverse scenery—is our state’s biggest tourist attraction. Do not underestimate the attractiveness of the environment that we enjoy every day to those who do not have the opportunity to wake up here in the morning and live their daily life. The destination of overseas travellers, especially those from the Asian market, is determined by exactly what we enjoy every day. They want to see our blue skies, the openness of our roads and our blue beaches and white sands, and they want to enjoy our clean rivers and our diversity. The diversity of WA’s environment from the Karri Valley Resort down south all the way up to the Kimberley in the north is truly amazing, and it is all environmental. It is something that this government is committed to protecting and keeping safe so that it is there to be enjoyed by generations to come. That is why it was vitally important that we invest in the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, which is the largest conservation project ever undertaken in Western Australia. The strategy focuses on protecting the Kimberley region by making sure that the on-ground conservation programs and the creation of the five new marine parks and the new Kimberley national park are there for every Australian and visitor to enjoy. The new Kimberley national park will be the largest national park in Australia. Again, it is something that we take for granted. This government initiative that protects the Kimberley has enabled Western Australia to hold the largest national park in Australia. We have already made significant progress by creating the Lalang-garram–Camden Sound and Eighty Mile Beach Marine Parks, which are enjoyed by not only many locals, but also international visitors. Our German market visitors love to fly into Perth, pick up a four-wheel drive and head north to experience the openness and the beauty of the Kimberley region. This strategy remains a major priority of the state government. We have invested over \$103 million to make sure that we protect the Kimberley for generations to enjoy.

Ecotourism is a growing sector in the tourism industry. Many people think it is just glamping. At the moment a magnificent new glamping ecotourism development is happening at Pinkies Beach on Rottne Island. Ecotourism is an experience that people around the world are searching for. They want to experience the diversity of nature. What we have here in Western Australia from the tip of the north to the bottom of the south is more diverse than anywhere else in the world. These people are prepared to come and pay for it and enjoy it, but they also understand the importance of leaving the smallest footprint possible while they experience our wonderful nature-based parks, treks and trails. Western Australia has a lot to be proud of with our parks and our walking trails, including the Bibbulmun Track. Many people from around the world come to Western Australia so that they can say that they walked along the Bibbulmun Track. As a child growing up in the hills, walking part of the Bibbulmun Track was our monthly exercise. At the time I did not understand the relevance, but now I totally appreciate the experience and know that I was lucky to grow up doing that. Growing up in the hills gives you a different perspective on life and how we should live amongst our environment compared with the situation of many people who, unfortunately, have to grow up in the inner suburbs, or what some people call the concrete cities. Growing up in the hills enabled me to enjoy and play in that environment, and also understand the importance of making sure that we fit within our environment while at the same time providing others with the opportunity to enjoy and protect it. As I said, this government is also committed to the new marine park at Roebuck Bay in the Kimberley and Horizontal Falls in the North Kimberley, and the extension of the proposed North Kimberley marine park right up to the Northern Territory border.

One of the other most amazing experiences also related to our wonderful environment is swimming with the whale sharks at Ningaloo Reef in Exmouth. I was not a fan of scuba diving or snorkelling. To be honest, I had never done it in my life. I am a landlubber and I love to look at the ocean from afar or on a boat. The idea of diving into a deep, dark blue ocean in the middle of nowhere was not something that tickled my fancy. When I went up to Exmouth to open the Ningaloo Whaleshark Festival I was convinced—to say it politely—into joining a local tour operator by making the remark, “How could I come up here and not enjoy swimming with the whale sharks?” I was up there with Hon Mark Lewis to open the Ningaloo festival, and I believe that Mark does not miss many of them. Unfortunately, I am not able to get up there as often as possible, but it is part of Mark’s electorate and I know he enjoys visiting Exmouth and everything it has on offer there. Anyway, I was obligated to go on a boat to swim with the whale sharks. I jumped off the edge of the boat and was shallow breathing for the first 10 minutes—I thought I was going to pass out. As I looked down into the black ocean and wondered what else was down there, a massive whale shark appeared from nowhere beneath me. It crossed my mind that if I did not see a whale shark of that size, what else was down there that I did not know about? I thought that if I kept swimming with the pack and made sure that I was not last, I should be okay.

Hon Simon O’Brien: Did the whale shark take fright at this point?

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: No, the whale shark was extremely friendly and not as rude as some people in this place.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think that may have crossed the personal boundary there.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: Anyway, you do not talk about a female in bathers.

Before I was rudely interrupted by my wonderful colleague, when this whale shark appeared from the deepest, blackest ocean, all my fears disappeared. To be able to swim alongside this magnificent animal that lives within our ocean was the best and most humbling experience I have ever had. I did not do it only once; I jumped off that boat seven times in the one trip, not even thinking twice as they said, "There's another whale shark coming along. This one has its calf. Off we go. Let's jump in again." We were extremely lucky; we got to swim with seven different whale sharks that day. Some people do not always experience that. The reason we were able to have this experience is that WA leads the world in the conservation of this magnificent animal—the whale shark. As we were diving—actually, we were swimming; let us not pretend that I was diving as I was snorkelling—or swimming with the whale shark, the tour operators came with us. They were marine biologists. One woman dived down, and took records while swimming alongside the whale shark. She knew whether it was tagged, she was able to record its sex, and she gained other vital information. They took that information back as part of their whale shark management program. We have been able to protect these whale sharks and enable them to continue breeding and increase their population. They come to our foreshore and we have the wonderful opportunity to enjoy the beautiful wildlife and our marine animals.

This year we have extended the attraction of swimming with a whale shark to swimming with a humpback whale. We will also be monitoring the humpback whale, which will enable us to protect them as a species while providing everyone with a wonderful experience. I say to all those members in this house that if they have never had the opportunity to go to Exmouth and enjoy our magnificent Ningaloo Reef, they should do so. A lot of Western Australians believe it is the best reef in Australia. I do not know about the one on the east coast. Ningaloo Reef is an amazing reef, one that is protected by the marine parks that this government continues to invest in. If members have not been, please go and visit Exmouth, jump off the back of a boat, have some fun and enjoy our beautiful and natural coastline.

There are so many other ecotourism-style events such as mountain bike riding. The first thing people may say is that mountain bike riding does not help the environment as people ride through our national parks and our bushland. They wonder how this can be of any benefit. Through the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the government works with the mountain bike community to deliver a safe, environmentally reliable and great experience for not only the rider, but also the people who live in those areas. Mountain biking around the world is a sport and a tourism attraction that is growing day by day. People around the world are looking to come and experience tracks that we have on offer here in Western Australia. I have started a few of the races. Many international riders say that they would never miss coming to WA to enjoy the bike trails that we have built for our mountain bikers.

It is obvious that this government believes in investing in the environment. It is compassionate, it cares and it delivers to make sure that everything we enjoy every single day of our lives will be here for generations to come to enjoy and for tourism visitors to come and experience. We need to invest in all fields across every portfolio in this state to make sure that our state is the best state to live in and that we can deliver the best outcomes for the people of Western Australia. That is why I will go back to what I said at the beginning of my speech: we are a government that delivers.

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: Would Hon Jim Chown like to know more about the whale sharks?

Hon Jim Chown: No. I am happy to hear that you survived the experience.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: I did. Thank you very much. My husband increased our insurance at the time.

Hon Liz Behjat: What about the Bibbulmun Track?

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: I touched on that lightly. It is a magnificent track for people to get out and enjoy. I know it goes all the way down to Margaret River —

Hon Col Holt: Albany.

Hon ALYSSA HAYDEN: It goes to Albany. I have been only as far as the section near Yallingup. I will need to get down to Albany.

The section of the Bibbulmun Track that goes through the East Metropolitan Region is used constantly throughout the year. It does not matter what the weather is; rail, hail or shine, there are walkers, riders and people enjoying it for an hour or a day. The brave ones take it on for a week, and I take my hat off to them.

We have so much to offer in WA under the tourism and environment portfolios. I wanted to finish where I started: that is, by saying that this government believes in taking action. We do not stop at just forming committees, we do not just have talkfests and we do not sit around, as I think Hon Liz Behjat said in her speech last week, singing *Kumbaya* and holding hands. We take action. We deliver on the ground, unlike anyone on the other side has done during their term of government. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for moving this motion and giving us the opportunity to remind the community and those who are tuned in that the Liberal government cares

about delivering on environmental outcomes. I encourage the Greens to consider where they put their preference votes at the next election.

Visitors — John XXIII College

The PRESIDENT: I welcome into the public gallery of the Legislative Council students and staff from John XXIII College who are here to see how the Legislative Council works and get a feel for the Parliament of Western Australia. Welcome.

Debate Resumed

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [1.57 pm] — in reply: I am dismayed that no-one wants to take up the cudgels in this debate. I thought by interjection that at least we would get some positive contribution perhaps via Hon Stephen Dawson to amend the motion to congratulate Hon Helen Morton on her Dirk Hartog photography. I would have accepted such an amendment, and then we could have all agreed to it. But, no, he could not be bothered. However, for those members who have contributed to this debate, I thank them very much for doing so. Hon Donna Faragher, the minister representing the Minister for Environment and sometime environment minister herself, was well worth listening to. When we talk about the environment, so often it is an area that is given over to emotional response rather than hearing the cold, hard, clinical, professional contributions such as that that we heard from Hon Donna Faragher, and I thank her for that. I would also like to thank Hon Alyssa Hayden for her passionate support of the government's record. I was delighted to hear about her taking to the water off Ningaloo to swim with whale sharks, something that I have often wanted to do as well. My flippant interjection was not intended in a rude way; it was just that she was —

Several members interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Hon Alyssa Hayden is obviously a formidable opponent and I am glad she is on our side. That was all I was indicating with my interjection, and Alyssa knows that.

I was disappointed with the contribution of one or two members opposite. They did not seem to want to get up to even talk about it, and I am going to reflect on that in a moment in response. I will at least do them the courtesy of showing that I listened. I was told that we had moved the motion and then given nothing in support of it. I was able to rattle off a whole range of initiatives. Just in listing them, it was a very long and, indeed, incomplete list of the record. Members opposite are in denial. That probably says more about them than it says about the current government.

I have been observing the progress, limited as it is, of the Biodiversity Conservation Bill that is proceeding under orders of the day at the moment. I do not know what their problem is. Perhaps it is just that they are not doing it; it is not their creature. That is what they object to. They do not want to acknowledge that this government is doing something significant. Rather than get on board, it is just carp, carp, carp all the way. Unfortunately for them, of course, that just proves the proposition in the motion that members on this side have supported. In the first instance, the current government should be congratulated on its performance, but, as a corollary to that, if we compare and contrast, we see that the alternative, in history as well as in prospect, does not have much to offer. I think that is very sad from the point of view of the Australian Labor Party, because it prides itself on having some sort of mortgage in this area. However, I do not see much evidence of delivery and actual substance. Sure, members opposite can kowtow to all the pressure groups in this debate and they can rope in people from the Conservation Council of Western Australia and give them spots on their front bench and otherwise give over their party to the pressure group du jour, but the Labor Party has failed to come up with some decent policy as a mainstream political party and a sometime government—god help us—and it cannot even engage intelligently about it.

Hon Helen Morton made an important contribution and I thank her for that. I thank her also for her photos of wildflowers on Dirk Hartog Island. What a lovely souvenir. She has provided a copy of a card with more than 20 photos on it and I thank her for that.

There is a story doing the rounds at the moment about tourism, which was another aspect of our environmental presentation. During my earlier remarks, I mentioned some of the facilities that this government has provided at The Gap near Albany to help people enjoy the environmental experience, but also as an aid to tourism. In the last day or so, we have seen more hurly-burly, with the opposition trying to score some pretty dubious political points on the one hand, while on the other there is the background of a government that makes things happen in this state and can point to the built environment, amongst other things, to show the way that the state is being enhanced in so many ways and in so many different portfolios. Again and again the point is made; it is substance versus carping rhetoric. I am not going to continue to make that point for much longer, except to say again thanks very much to those who have contributed to the motion. It shows just how much our opponents care about this issue that they did not bother. They could not be bothered to get up to take issue. They could not be bothered to get up and say, "Hang on; we've got some ideas in this space." There was nothing at all.

Hon Peter Collier: We don't stand up and refute their allegations; we cop it.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Yes.

One item that was raised by other members that I will respond to relates to the Esperance lead issue. That is a pretty good example that we can point to for us to compare what is being done. That was actual performance. What happened in Esperance that resulted in large parts of the town being contaminated with lead dust was a very regrettable incident. Certainly, in hindsight, one can easily be critical, but I am not going to be critical in the sense that something occurred there, because in the field of commercial and industrial activity, sometimes things happen that have to be addressed. This is where governments come in. It is how they respond to problems that arise. Do they respond to it with press releases and promises of talkfests or do they actually do something about it? The former government was criticised in this forum and elsewhere for its lack of response, its lack of a sense of urgency and its lack of commitment to do something to address the issue of lead pollution in the Esperance township. But was there not a dramatic change when this government came to office? It was driven from the very top. I remember going down to Esperance early on with the Premier, who wanted to make sure it had whole-of-government support, to reassure and demonstrate to the people of Esperance that their town was going to be cleaned up, that they would not have to worry about lead poisoning in their children and that we were going to act decisively, and that is what we did. It was difficult. We went down there and people were angry, and understandably so. People were mistrustful of government and said, "We've been promised things before but government hasn't delivered", and who could blame them. So we set about fixing the problem, and it is now a matter of record that that was done. It was expensive, but it had to be done, so we found the money and we persevered with it. It was going to be a real challenge to check the roofs, the roof spaces, the yards and the grounds of every residence, every public space and every commercial space in a big town like Esperance. That is what we did. It was hard work and it took a long time, but it was done and people know that their places were cleaned up. It is all very well for a government to announce that it is going to do these things and set these things up, but it has to do them. It has to be there to see it through when people are concerned about the inconvenience of having guys clad in protective clothing and breathing apparatus in their houses, getting up in their roof spaces and so on to clean them out. That is what is involved, dare I say it—getting our hands dirty. I am rather proud of the role that I played as part of government in that, not as Minister for Environment but as Minister for Transport dealing with that problem. Again, it is not something members opposite want to talk about anymore. It is a pity they do not want to acknowledge what we did about it. They sure as hell do not want to talk about it. I thank those members here who have mentioned it today. All in all, I think this motion is eminently supportable.

Hon Peter Collier: Absolutely. It has almost been unanimously supported in the chamber.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That will probably be the result if and when we get to a vote shortly.

The other thing I am comfortable with about this government's attitude to the environment portfolio is that, although I might move a motion congratulating the government on its environmental performance, I have never heard the government itself say, "Gee, we are perfect in this; gee, the job's done, gee, nothing else can be done." No; at every turn, this government says, very reassuringly, "There's more to be done; there's always more to be done and we are getting on and doing it." That is the reason the government deserves some congratulations in this portfolio area; it realises it is a job that has to be pursued. It is not just a single task that we do and then say it is ticked off and we will move on. It is something we have to beaver away at every day in the face of all sorts of criticism from various special interest groups and others without, unfortunately these days, the support of a bipartisan approach via the Parliament, more is the pity; nonetheless, one that needs to be pursued and more strength to those pursuing it so positively.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting President (Hon Alanna Clohesy) her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Hon Ken Baston	Hon Peter Collier	Hon Col Holt	Hon Simon O'Brien
Hon Liz Behjat	Hon Donna Faragher	Hon Peter Katsambanis	Hon Phil Edman (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Jacqui Boydell	Hon Nick Goiran	Hon Mark Lewis	
Hon Paul Brown	Hon Dave Grills	Hon Robyn McSweeney	
Hon Jim Chown	Hon Alyssa Hayden	Hon Michael Mischin	

Noes (10)

Hon Alanna Clohesy	Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson	Hon Samantha Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Stephen Dawson	Hon Adele Farina	Hon Sally Talbot	
Hon Kate Doust	Hon Martin Pritchard	Hon Ken Travers	

Extract from *Hansard*
[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 24 August 2016]
p5077f-5086a
Hon Helen Morton; Hon Alyssa Hayden; Hon Simon O'Brien

Pairs

Hon Brian Ellis
Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Helen Morton

Hon Darren West
Hon Lynn MacLaren
Hon Robin Chapple

Question put and passed.