

Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park — Statement by Minister for Environment

Resumed from 12 May 2009.

Motion

Hon HELEN MORTON: I move —

That the statement be noted.

The Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park was created on 8 May 2009 and vested in the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. This government was proud to announce that this was the first marine park created in Western Australia since December 2004 and the first on the south coast. The Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park is a spectacularly scenic area where tall forest meets the sea and is largely surrounded by the Walpole–Nornalup National Park. The inlets are a permanently open estuarine system, one of very few in the South West that experiences marine-like conditions for most of the year. The park has diverse marine habitats and at least 40 fish species including larger fish, such as sharks, that are uncommon in other estuaries. The marine park provides habitat for a range of waterbirds including pelicans, gulls, terns, shearwaters, gannets and albatross, as well as migratory shore birds. The Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Fisheries are working collaboratively to implement management strategies in the park’s management plan. The untouched nature of the park and the tranquil waters, meandering rivers and wild coastal scenery of the inlet provides a wealth of opportunities for nature appreciation, tourism and water sports. The state government is committed to increasing the number of marine parks in Western Australia. On 22 October 2010, the Premier and the then Minister for Environment released for public comment an indicative management plan for the proposed Camden Sound Marine Park, and also announced the government’s intention to create three other marine parks in the Kimberley region—in the north Kimberley, at Eighty Mile Beach and at Roebuck Bay.

Hon KEN BASTON: I want to say a few words on this because it brings back fond memories. I can remember when this was introduced on 12 May 2009. The minister at the time assured me that recreational fishing would not be affected, and the statement indeed provides that recreational fishing will still be allowed.

I do not get down there very often, although I would like to; I have caught some magnificent King George whiting when I have been down there, which is a South West delight. I am sure the Chairman has had one or two! A dear friend of mine has frequented Walpole since he was a kid, has always fished on the Walpole Inlet, and has always taken his dog with him to fish. What we have to be careful about with recreational areas is that even though they have been turned into marine parks, there is usually a management committee that sits at a lower level or on the ground level that has a totally different idea about what a marine park should look like from what the intention was. In this particular instance, my friend arrived back after catching a couple of King George whiting and there was a ranger waiting for him, saying, “No dogs allowed anymore, because this is now a marine park”. I can assure members that it did not take my friend long to get on the phone to me; I will not repeat some of the words he used, but I got onto the minister straightaway. It was during budget estimates, so I fired a question to the Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation and was given an undertaking that activities that were already taking place there would still be allowed to continue. That management order was changed, but I make the point that we create a lot of these marine parks and we can actually take them too far. We develop them, but then there turns out to be a management strategy underneath, which becomes the reality of how it happens. We continue to make parks, and everyone needs to be aware that governance needs to actually look after the people who live there and utilise those facilities.

Hon JON FORD: I would like to make some comments on this. The minister’s contribution grabbed my attention because I can remember at the time—it was some time ago that the ministerial statement was made—that somehow this government claimed credit for initiating this park, and of course that is incorrect. In fact, this particular park was handed to the government on a platter; the indicative management plan for the proposed park was released for comment in 2006, when we were in government and I was the Minister for Fisheries. I remember this park particularly well, because it was the first time I managed to get my own government to agree to supply recurrent funding for two FTEs to permanently manage the park. I think Hon David Templeman was Minister for the Environment at the time.

Whilst I am pleased that the current government got the job of announcing and committing to the park, it was initiated by the Carpenter government. The minister also referred to the proposed Eighty Mile Beach park; I also remember that one very well. I opposed it when the Labor Party was in government, because it is the main hatchery for juvenile *pinctada maxima*, which is the pearl. Most of the hatchery pearls were, at that time, being produced in aquaculture in the form of oyster spat. That was money in the bank, from a sustainable fisheries perspective, at Eighty Mile Beach because it was not being utilised, except to make sure that there was no

inbreeding in respect of the aquaculture spat. In the end I was convinced, and my input was taken into account. Quite a sensible arrangement was put in place. It was an initiative by then Minister for the Environment, Hon Mark McGowan; and a great job that was. It was designed specifically as an offset to the Gorgon development to ensure that turtles—I am not quite sure of the specific species of turtle—had an area free to come ashore to breed. That was the specific reason for that park. It was another great Labor initiative. I am glad this government committed to that.

I now refer to the Camden marine park. That is pretty good except, when it was announced in this place by the former Minister for Environment, Hon Donna Faragher, she could not tell us what values we were trying to protect. There was a lot of talk about whales and the research up there, but we did not hear about the benthic, demersal and pelagic values. A lot of activity is still allowed. Of course we have not heard about the nurseries. It is very convenient, the way the lines have been drawn, that the most significant parts in need of protection are excluded. There is still a fair whack of debate to go about that. We know something is probably close to the mark because everybody is unhappy with it, including industry, the tourist trade, the charter operators and the Indigenous people. The government is getting pretty close to the mark. It still has some way to go.

I am glad the government has restated that it is committed to multiple marine parks. I would like to know why the Capes marine park has not been announced. There is a line item in the budget of a few million dollars to continue studies that have been going on for about five or six years. It would be nice to hear when that park will be announced. That has really been handed over on a plate. Of course that park is a bit more difficult. It is a sensitive area because there are Liberal–National Party seats along that area and all down the centre. We will see whether the government will live up to the convictions of its statement and have the strength to put in place what is needed. I do not agree with mandatory marine park allocations—30 per cent, 17 per cent, 16 per cent et cetera. The value we are trying to protect needs to be named, whether it is a benthic population, sponges, sea slugs or abalone. The government has to say what it is trying to protect and then establish a park that protects those values.

I will support the government wholeheartedly in its stated objectives of supporting and increasing marine parks in Western Australia. There is a lot of work to go. I am glad the government brought to the house's attention through this ministerial statement the great achievements of the former Labor government and the current government's further commitment to it.

Consideration of statement adjourned, on motion by Hon Ed Dermer.