

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO — GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

Motion

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [1.16 pm]: I move —

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

I am delighted to move the motion standing in my name. When I gave notice of this motion on 20 June 2013, I contemplated that by the time it came up on the notice paper and I was able to substantively address it, there would be a splendid record of achievement in this portfolio area, and once again I have been proven to be right. I acknowledge the efforts of the Barnett government and particularly its Ministers for Environment for the way in which they have conducted themselves and what they have achieved in this area.

Indeed, only today the government is breaking new ground with an announcement that may have taken some by surprise. It may have taken some by surprise, but I am now free to share with members the news that a container deposit scheme is contemplated for Western Australia. The government has given undertakings to proceed with it.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members, please! Let us start as we intend to continue.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I think we probably have!

The PRESIDENT: It is not what some of you might have in mind; it is in compliance with the standing orders, under which the member on his feet has the opportunity to make his remarks and everybody else has the opportunity, and indeed the duty, to listen.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Thank you very much, Mr President. I assure you, I have not even got started yet!

The announcement this morning of the container deposit scheme is just another tick on a very long line of boxes demonstrating the Liberal–National government's commitment to, in this case, reducing littering and improving recycling rates in Western Australia. It is just one initiative, and I want to go through a number of other initiatives in the course of my remarks this afternoon. I know that Hon Sue Ellery will be in the very vanguard of those wanting to cheer my remarks to the echo. Indeed, she has already tried to offer some views, but she will have some opportunity now. Who knows—in my enthusiasm I may even be able to declare some things that excite her to unruly interjection, but I know you will be tolerant of that, Mr President, in recognising the member's enthusiasm and excitement.

I do, however, anticipate that in considering the motion before us there may be some negative, carping views to the contrary. There may be some who do not wish to associate themselves with the sentiments of this motion and want to argue the toss. I look forward to that but in anticipation of it, perhaps it is only fair that I also compare and contrast the performance of this government with that of a previous Labor government or two so that members can have a balanced body of information upon which to contemplate their support or otherwise of this motion. I will come to that shortly. I need to refer to a debate from only yesterday in talking about the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015, when we saw a particular mindset coming from Her Majesty the Queen's loyal opposition that does not do it any credit. I will go into matters that the opposition has raised, such as consultation, and contemplate its record on consultation and compare it with the current government's record in the environment portfolio. I will refer to the opposition's performance when in government on one or two critical areas in which it was found to be monumentally deficient in its consultation on the environment. I will hold up the opposition's words and see how hollow they really are.

Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson: What about your record?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: They are keen as mustard, so I will not keep Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson in anticipation any longer. Let us talk about our record. The environmental achievements have been led and championed by this government and its environment ministers, including Hon Donna Faragher, who is a colleague of ours in this house. I have praised her efforts before. I well remember the time when, barely after we had been sworn in, she was called on to make a tough call and a ministerial decision, but she might want to remind us about that a bit later on when she speaks. On many occasions we have had the opportunity to congratulate her, and I do so again. I also acknowledge the sterling work of Minister Albert Jacob and what he has done. Let me go through just some of the achievements of the Liberal–National government in this portfolio and then perhaps I will contrast that with the performance of the previous government. Since 2008, several national parks have been created by the Liberal–National government that include Dirk Hartog Island National Park,

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Prince Regent National Park and Murujuga National Park. Just the other day there was an announcement, to general acclaim and enthusiasm, to create the new Abrolhos Islands national park. In addition, four new marine parks have been created: Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park, Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park, Camden Sound Marine Park and Ngari Capes Marine Park. The creation of all those proposed new marine reserves increases the total area of the marine parks and reserves in the state from the approximately 1.5 million hectares that we inherited to over 5 million hectares since the government came to office in 2008. It is a very substantial increase and a significant contribution to the reserves of the state of Western Australia and, most importantly, it is a very tangible, concrete, real and admirable contribution to activity in the environment portfolio.

Onshore, an additional 503 000 hectares of land has been added to our terrestrial conservation estate and again the government is to be congratulated for that. It has also committed to further new marine parks in the Kimberley at Roebuck Bay and Horizontal Falls and an extension of the North Kimberley marine park right up to the Northern Territory border. Across the board the government that I am pleased to support is delivering nature-based activities including walking, bike and driving trails and the creation of interpretation information throughout our parks to aid in the experience and education of those who enjoy those parks. Recent examples include the world-class lookouts opened at The Gap and Natural Bridge in Albany, hailed by all of those who have observed and participated in using those facilities that provide not only a better way, but also a safe way for us to enjoy our environment. I am sure that the 20 000 visitors to those attractions in the first couple of weeks after their opening certainly appreciated the great new experience that they were able to enjoy.

I will quickly run through a number of other initiatives. The government's "Western Australian Caravan and Camping Action Plan 2013–2018" is again about giving substance and moving forward in the environment portfolio. The Parks for People initiative will deliver 450 new camp and caravan sites and upgrade accommodation in, I believe, 16 of our national parks and reserves right throughout Western Australia, ensuring people are able to experience and enjoy our magnificent natural environment. That is a key part of the environment portfolio, as members will appreciate. If we can get our increasingly city-based youth and child population out into our environment to experience it in a positive way and to value it, that also augurs well for the future environment policy and the support the environment enjoys from the public at large. It was pointed out to me that Aboriginal government employment in conservation over a period of time is at a record level. All Western Australians have a stake in our environment in so many different ways. Some of us are perhaps involved in agriculture or tourism in which it is a different sort of relationship, but it all relies on making sure that we are proper custodians of our environment for posterity. Every generation has to recognise that we must do whatever we can to safeguard the environment for the benefit, in so many different ways, of future generations. I understand that the previous government employed 15 Aboriginal rangers to carry out duties to support the conservation estate. Under the Liberal–National government that figure now stands at 200 traditional owners who are now employed and working on country. That takes it from what some might see as a token investment to a substantial investment to involve traditional owners in actively supporting, and being actively supported, the conservation of our living environment.

I have mentioned the container deposit scheme, and I am sure that Hon Donna Faragher and others may wish to mention a few other initiatives that have been taken. From what I have outlined, we can see something that is quite clear and something that I have observed in my number of years around the cabinet table: a conspicuous effort to advance government's performance in the environment portfolio going right back to 2008 when we first came to office. I have seen it and I can vouch for it firsthand, and I am delighted to stand again today and acknowledge Hon Donna Faragher, as well as Hon Albert Jacob, for their great stewardship in what can be a very challenging portfolio area.

I note that members would be disappointed if I made this a Liberal-centric speech. As there has already been some interjection by others wanting to participate, I also have to knowledge the Australian Labor Party and a number of people—I hope I do not damn them in the eyes of their colleagues too severely by mentioning them—such as Hon Stephen Dawson, who was, in his day, a policy adviser on the environment and has a mature understanding of some of the issues that confront government that go beyond the rhetoric that we so often hear in political circles and get down to the reality of what can and should be achieved. I hope he is not overly hamstrung in being a voice of reason as we approach the election and we hear more and more of the over-the-top complaints that we have been hearing of late from members opposite about environmental matters.

One of the issues of the day is the bill before the house. Of course, this is not the second reading debate on the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015, so I will not seek to go into that as part of this debate, Mr President, because you would quite properly pull me up if I sought to do so. I will have another opportunity to do that, perhaps later on today or tomorrow.

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It has come to my notice in contemplating a motion such as this, which invites people to compare the performance of successive governments on the environment, that we are already seeing some pretty extraordinary politicking going on as the opposition tries to position itself and, in so doing, tries to position the Liberal–National government on environmental matters. What I do know about the bill that I have mentioned is that it has been a very long time coming. Indeed, in eight years, the former Labor government never brought forward this bill. I am not critical of it for that, but it ought to remember that before it criticises the current government in the terms that it has been employing. In particular, I have had to sit through a number of speeches in which members complained about a lack of consultation on this bill, which has been in gestation since 1992 and its development has been actively pursued for years under the current government. I will leave the minister in charge of the bill to respond to those allegations and charges about lack of consultation when we get back to the second reading debate. Let us talk about the Labor Party in government and its attempts at consultation.

I would like to remind members of the recent forty-first report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs titled “Petition No. 42—Request to repeal the *Environmental Protection (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) Notice 2005*”. Finding 6 of the committee report states —

The Committee finds that the then Department of Environment limited its consultation in relation to the draft *Environmental Protection (Environmentally Sensitive Areas) Notice 2005* to only seven days (and for peak stakeholder bodies only) before the Notice was published in the *Government Gazette*. This consultation was so limited as to be pointless and was merely undertaken to ‘technically’ comply with legislative requirements.

That is a very damning finding from the life of the previous government, and it gives a partial response to the allegations that have been so wildly made in the context of the biodiversity bill and the consultation that went into the development of that piece of legislation.

Visitors — Kingsway Christian College

The PRESIDENT: Order, member. Sorry to interrupt, but could I just take a brief opportunity to welcome students from Kingsway Christian College into the public gallery of the Legislative Council. Welcome to the Parliament of Western Australia and the Legislative Council during a very interesting debate.

Debate Resumed

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I would like to join with you, Mr President, in welcoming students to this debate.

I was mentioning that the standing committee of this house in this Parliament found that the efforts of the former Labor government in both 2004 and 2005—I was referring to the 2005 incident in quoting a finding of the standing committee—had been woefully inadequate in its consultation mechanisms on something that really mattered. In the tick-the-box type of consultation that occurred and was reported on in that particular report, some rushed consultation dialogues were entered into with a few peak bodies. The former government said, “Here’s this far-reaching environmentally sensitive areas notice, which will affect an uncertain number of thousands of landholders in Western Australia. You’ve got seven days because we’re required under law to consult with you. We’ll give you seven days to tell us what you think, because that’s all we’ve got.” It was not a very wide consultation and it did not get much response, but the Pastoralists and Graziers Association was one organisation that responded. Again, I refer to an extract given at page 29 of the committee’s report. The PGA submitted —

I have already contacted your office voicing our organisation’s concern over the extremely short time frame for comment on this notice, especially in light of the incorrect draft of the notice being circulated. ... The PGA has thoroughly expressed its opposition to the Environmental Regulations in their current form, due to the fact that they have been demonstrated to be unworkable. Members of our association are still awaiting clarification from the Government on the rights of producers to clear native vegetation to erect new fencing in agricultural and pastoral area, which is an essential farming practice.

The Western Australian Farmers Federation submitted the following —

The main concern that we have with documents such as the notice is the lack of plain English and to a degree I understand the legal reasons behind that, however, the average farmer really has some difficulty in coming to terms with the terminology and lack of definition in the working which leaves them open to interpretation and potential abuse by agency people.

Yet the explanatory memorandum signed off by that former government and provided to the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation described the submissions as “generally supportive or neutral” and stated that “no substantive issues were raised”. That is part of the Australian Labor Party’s record in government for

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consultation. It is inadequate, insincere and misrepresented to a joint standing committee of this Parliament, as set out in the forty-first report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. That is its record. I do not want to hear these crocodile tears when members opposite come in here and bleat about inadequate consultation when what they mean is that whatever activist group is waving its tail at the material time has not got its own way and, therefore, it is opposed to it. How does it express that? The activist group has not got its way so it says that it has not been consulted enough.

Hon Stephen Dawson: How can you say they have been consulted on this bill—not on this bill before the house, member?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Unfortunately, Hon Stephen Dawson was on urgent parliamentary business when I was saying some very nice things about him, thereby —

Hon Stephen Dawson: It could be career-limiting.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It could cruelly limit the member's career in the future, but that is a matter for his colleagues and not for me. I was saying some very nice things about him. I hope the member will not let me down. I hope they have not got at him behind the Chair.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I shall look forward to reading *Hansard*, member. Apologies for interjecting.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: There is one example of a Labor government indulging in a quite extraordinarily, if I may say so, dishonest exercise, because what the people whom needed to be consulted wanted was not even asked for. The Labor government did not go to them. Environmentally sensitive area notices went out, potentially affecting thousands of people across the state in a whole range of ways, including devaluing property, yet were those individual landowners asked? No, they were not. The Labor government went to a few peak bodies such as the Conservation Council and did what it was telling it to do, but it did not consult with individual landowners and it gave peak bodies representing those landowners seven days for consultation. They came back to the government and said that the legislation was woefully inadequate and they did not like what the government was doing and they were vigorously opposed to it. Then the ALP compounded the felony by advising a joint standing committee that there is no controversy and no opposition to this in writing. There is so much hot air and sort of sanctimonious hyperbole that we are hearing now, I look forward to revisiting that when we bring on that bill. For now, all we know from how members in the Labor Party voted in the other place is that they are not in favour of a government that brings comprehensive environmental protection legislation before Parliament. It wants to find things to disagree with. You know what? If the Labor Party allows itself to be guided and dictated to by particular activist groups that are not getting everything they want, it will find plenty of encouragement in its disagreement, but it is letting down the environmental estate and the people of Western Australia, the mainstream of Western Australia, by adopting that particular attitude.

At least this government has brought forward a bill that deals comprehensively with a range of matters that are well past their use-by date and need to be updated. We will come back to that legislation again. Whether this once-in-a-generation opportunity to replace outdated and deficient legislation is adopted, or opposed for what I think are quite spurious reasons, is in the hands of members in this place. I know that when the legislature contemplates a gamut of environmental protection legislation, we will find people who disagree with it and disagree with bits here and there and with what we propose to do. "Is this penalty right? Is that penalty wrong? Can we find some highly inventive way of opposing this bill? Let us say we have not been consulted about it." This bill is very much about the machinery of government and updating machinery that already exists.

Hon Sue Ellery: Are you making a second reading contribution or talking on the motion?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No, I am not, but how can I contemplate a motion of this type when a bill such as that is in our house already, without at least referring to the quest of this government to provide the legislation that we need and contrast that with the pointless and determined opposition of the ALP? I think that is legitimate in the context of the motion that I have moved and the debate that is before us now. As I have already said, we will return to the proper second reading debate on that bill at the appropriate time.

I have also mentioned marine park creation and the progress of planning for and implementing of marine parks. How good was the last government's record in this area? It was very, very slow at best. It took up to five years to release indicative management plans and after eight years of planning it still did not get on with creating those parks. This government has got on with things and delivered. Perhaps the ALP is more interested in setting up committees and talking about things than achieving on-the-ground outcomes. This government is concerned about supporting the listing of threatened ecological communities and protecting critical habitats. It is doing everything a responsible government should be doing to support our environmental goals as a community.

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I do not know where the ALP sits on all this. Does it support stronger penalties for people who break our environmental laws and who threaten or endanger species of animals or flora? We will find out from Labor members whether they have feet of clay. Quite clearly, the government that I am pleased to support supports those things. It is prepared to make the tough decisions. It has done so consistently in the face of eternal sniping from members opposite who have demonstrated while in government that they do not have much to offer as an alternative. As we head to the next state election, I think we will find that the current government has a strong record that it can go to the people on, but what will be the ALP's approach? From what we have seen so far, it will be a lot of hot air, hyperbole and extravagant claims. It will be based on a sad record of achieving precious little when it has had the opportunity to do so in government. I will stack up the performance of the Ministers for Environment that I have alluded to today in this place and congratulate the minister once again for what he is continuing to achieve. I assure the minister that he has my public support in what he continues to do. Well done. I commend the motion to the house.

Distinguished Visitors — Chinese Delegation

The PRESIDENT: While I wait for another member to rise, I acknowledge another very important delegation in the gallery of the Legislative Council. This is the Chinese delegation. Welcome to the Parliament of Western Australia to see a bit of our parliamentary system in operation.

Debate Resumed

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Minister for Planning) [1.49 pm]: Thank you, Mr President.

Hon Kate Doust: It's your motion.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It is Hon Simon O'Brien's motion, which I wholeheartedly support. I thought that perhaps the opposition might like to say something, but —

Hon Stephen Dawson: All in good time.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: All in good time.

Hon Kate Doust: We couldn't deal with the repetitious hyperbole coming from your side.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: It is difficult, is it not, to hear the very good achievements of this government across a range of portfolios? But I am happy to add to this debate. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for putting this very good motion to the house. Since 2008, this government has a very, very strong record of positive action in the environment portfolio. I say that in the context of members on the other side of the chamber and others who often try to point out that the Liberal Party is not a friend of the environment. That is easily said by our opponents on the other side of the chamber, yet nothing could be further from the truth.

When I was Minister for Environment in 2008, the environment portfolio was hampered by inaction and general disinterest from members opposite.

Several members interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Decisions were not being made. Plenty of environmental assessments were ready for sign-off, but they were sitting there and nothing had been done with them. The previous government had not wanted to make hard decisions. Lots of initiatives had been talked about, but they had never been delivered. Hon Simon O'Brien has touched on a few of those, and I will mention those in the context of a broader discussion about the environment.

Since 2008, this government has made significant decisions and delivered positive environmental initiatives to an extent that we have not seen before in this state. Members on the other side will no doubt seek to disagree with me, but that is a fact. I do not intend to speak a great deal about the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015, because, obviously, it is sitting in this place at the moment and I am the lead speaker for the government on it, but I will say, in a general sense, that this government took a commitment to the 2013 election to introduce a new, modern biodiversity bill into this Parliament to replace the 65-year-old Wildlife Conservation Act. Until now, no government had done that. It has been talked about and talked about a lot by members opposite yet the only government to have brought a bill to the house is the Liberal-National government. That is something that members on the other side have never been able to achieve. I appreciate that members opposite do not like that and that they would have liked to have done that themselves, but they did not do it. Often the government is criticised about certain things and members opposite say we should have done this or that, and when we actually do something we hear them say that they do not like it and that we should consult more. The point is: when we make a decision, we get on and do it. I will say a little more about the biodiversity bill when we get to it during the appropriate time in the house, but I think it is important to recognise that bill. I know that the

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Minister for Environment has challenged anyone to point to any part in that legislation that is not streets ahead of what is in the current act—and no-one can point to that.

On some more general issues, Hon Simon O'Brien talked about our commitment to national parks and marine parks. Certainly, in my time as Minister for Environment it was important to enhance our national parks, which I am delighted to see has continued and been expanded. As part of that, we ensured that the people of Western Australia knew, appreciated and understood the importance of those parks, and, in doing that, also ensured that they were open, so that people could visit and enjoy them. My position has always been that in order for the community to engage and understand the importance of our natural environment people need to have the capacity to enjoy it as well, with all the necessary protocols in place to ensure that negative consequences do not occur. Part of that is an initiative that commenced when I was minister—rediscovering our national parks—which has led into the very successful Parks for People initiative. That is a \$21.5 million initiative that is delivering 450 new camp and caravan sites, and upgrading accommodation in 16 national parks and reserves throughout Western Australia. It ensures that more people will be able to experience and enjoy our natural environment. Importantly, it also builds on the \$60 million since 2008 that the Liberal–National government has provided to improve facilities in parks.

I think one of the largest initiatives that this government has undertaken—which, again, started from an election commitment given by us in 2008—is the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. When that strategy commenced, I think the funding commitment to it was around \$16 million. Now, it is over \$100 million. It is without a doubt the largest conservation project ever undertaken in this state. There are a number of elements to the strategy. I think that is the importance of the work that has been done over a number of years. It looks at not only specific issues of protection of the environment, but also incorporates tourism and Aboriginal rangers. It takes a landscape approach to the environment across the board, including research, on-ground conservation programs, and, as Hon Simon O'Brien referred to, the creation of five new marine parks. Of course, the new Kimberley national park will be Australia's largest national park. Rarely do I hear members on the other side of the chamber talk about this good initiative. It is a fantastic initiative implemented by this government.

Hon Simon O'Brien is correct that the previous government talked a lot about marine parks; again, there was a lot of talk but little action. This government has expanded the number of marine parks across the state into something we should be enormously proud of because it was a good decision to make. I will say as a former Minister for Environment that there are challenging issues and competing interests and views on marine parks but that has not stopped this government from taking the decision to establish these marine parks to protect the environment. We also recognise that there are legitimate interests from the perspective of fishing and mining industries, but that does not mean we cannot get a great outcome, and we have seen this happen time and again. The government has made significant progress through the creation of the Camden Sound and Eighty Mile Beach Marine Parks and has released management plans for other proposed reserves. Again, it is an unprecedented commitment by this government to provide some \$103 million for the protection of the Kimberley, and that is something that all members should be enormously proud of.

As I mentioned before, it included not only the on-ground conservation programs, but also research. It will create Aboriginal employment opportunities in tourism, for example, and economic and social outcomes will inevitably arise from such initiatives. Since 2008, we have seen Aboriginal employment on country rise from 15 to 200 people. More needs to be done but at least we are heading in the right direction. Hon Simon O'Brien referred to the three national parks we have created since coming to government in 2008: Dirk Hartog Island, Prince Regent and the Murujuga. We now have 100 national parks. I understand that Hon Helen Morton might be talking a little bit about Dirk Hartog Island as well, which will be fantastic.

Hon Stephen Dawson: She is giving away your secrets.

Hon Helen Morton: Possibly. That is okay; I am very happy about that.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I am just giving a little teaser.

An important decision we made early on in our time in government was the decision to create the office of the Environmental Protection Authority. It was very clear to me when I came into government that there were concerns about the independence of the EPA. The independence of the EPA had never been put into question. However, we reviewed the capacity for it to be allocated resources to work at times within the department and in its role as the EPA. It was an important decision to make and we determined that we would separate and create the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority. That was not a small decision to make, but was an important one that has stood the test of time. I think that we would all agree that the management and protection of the Swan and Canning Rivers is a complex and ongoing task, and the Liberal–National government remains firmly committed to ensuring a wide range of programs are delivered to maintain and protect the health —

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Hon Stephen Dawson: But you abolished the Swan River Trust.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order! Hon Donna Faragher has the call.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thank you. Yes, we have amalgamated the Swan River Trust with the Department of Parks and Wildlife, but the government believes that that amalgamation has in fact strengthened the management of Western Australia's environment and river parks and in some cases reduced the unnecessary duplication of roles. That was a decision by the government and it was a good decision.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That is a tremendous decision, but why would the ALP oppose it?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Well, this is the thing, Hon Simon O'Brien—they just like to oppose things.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: They just like to add committees and talk about things and think about it, and sit around a table but not actually do anything. That is the point. We get on and do it. Let me get back to where I was.

In terms of the Swan and Canning Rivers, we are absolutely committed to delivering a wide range of programs to continue to maintain and protect the health of our river park. There is no doubt that a number of interventions continue to be delivered by our government, and nutrient intervention technologies continue to be a major focus, with nutrient-stripping wetlands and a whole range of other measures. This government and Hon Simon O'Brien also referred to the great announcement today about a container deposit scheme.

Hon Simon O'Brien: But are members opposite going to applaud it?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Well, I think there is muted —

Several members interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Are members talking about Hon Sally Talbot's private member's bill?

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! One question; one speaker.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I am obviously very pleased to hear the announcement today about the container deposit scheme. The opposition is now trying to say we have delayed and all that sort of jazz and that finally we have done it. There is no doubt, when the members opposite were in government, they also talked and talked but did not deliver. There is no doubt that we are delivering on that.

Hon Kate Doust: It is a good distraction from other stories today.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: See, that is just so negative.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Thank you.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is just so disappointing, Madam Acting President. We put out a fantastic initiative and announcement, to which the opposition has said we have been caught. The opposition should say it is great! We have a thumbs up; this is looking positive! This is the point. No doubt, when we came into government, questions were asked whether we would introduce a container deposit scheme and I am happy to say that at that time there was discussion about and work on looking at a national model. If there was going to be a national model, that was what we would look to be part of. In the years that followed, other states and territories have decided to go it alone. They have obviously decided the national scheme will not happen, so they have gone it alone. We have taken the decision that we will now support that; we will take that action and that is something that will be very well received from not only environmental groups—I certainly hope that they would be coming out very strongly in support of the government's decision in this area—but also local government. Local government has always been a strong supporter of a container deposit scheme, as have many community groups. Groups such as the Girl Guides Western Australia and other community organisations have always seen this as a great initiative from a more community-based perspective and it certainly builds on other work that we have done over the years to reduce waste. We increased the fines for littering and illegal dumping quite significantly. We also raised the waste levy, which has helped to reduce landfill. The Minister for Environment also announced the \$20 million Better Bins kerbside collection pilot program. That program is designed to support local governments to introduce best practice kerbside collection services to increase recycling and reduce waste sent to landfill. That is a \$20 million program. I understand it was originally allocated \$7.5 million but due to its popularity it has gone to \$20 million. Then, of course, there is the \$10 million recycled construction products program and a host of other waste initiatives done through the Waste Authority and under

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the guidance of the minister, whose work in bringing the biodiversity legislation to Parliament is absolutely fantastic. No other Minister for Environment has done that and he should be recognised and applauded for his tenacity to get this legislation to this place.

I could go on all day about our environment portfolio because I believe very strongly that, despite the negativity of those on the other side, this government has a very strong record on the environment. As I say, those on the other side talked a lot, had a lot of committees, thought about it, put out discussion papers and generally did those sorts of things that did not lead to decisions. This government can look to its record: establishing the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority; now a decision on the container deposit scheme; introducing the Biodiversity Conservation Bill, something no other government has ever done; increasing penalties for littering and illegal dumping; implementing the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, the largest conservation initiative ever undertaken in Australia; establishing a considerable number of marine parks; and increasing the number of national parks. Since 2008 we have increased opportunities for more people to enjoy our national parks and reserves and everything they have to offer in a managed and constructive way. We have undertaken a range of environmental initiatives concerning the Swan and Canning Rivers, including nutrient-stripping wetlands to improve and protect our river systems. All those initiatives and many, many more have been undertaken by this government. The Minister for Environment continues to pursue a range of initiatives that will protect and further strengthen our environment for future generations because, at the end of the day, everyone in this chamber knows the importance of maintaining and enhancing our environment for future generations. I would like to think there is no difference among any of us on that point. Members opposite may disagree with some of the decisions the government takes but I can assure members, as not only a former Minister for Environment but also, indeed, a proud member of the Liberal–National government, that our government makes these decisions in the state's best interests to ensure that future generations have the environment we have today.

HON ADELE FARINA (South West) [2.12 pm]: It is interesting that the government has brought a motion to this place that seeks to sing the government's praises on the environment portfolio but can only present two speakers on the motion. It is a disgrace.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order!

Hon ADELE FARINA: I am sure that members on this side of the house would have been happy to be persuaded to support the motion. However, sadly, the mover of the motion presented no arguments to justify the motion. In fact, he struggled so much to find projects to talk about that he spent most of his time making assessments of and criticising former Labor governments for their historical decisions, completely irrelevant to the motion before us today. On this basis, the opposition cannot support the motion because no arguments have been presented by the mover of the motion in its support.

Although it is accepted that a few positive environmental initiatives have been made by the Liberal–National government, it is indeed a huge stretch to suggest a few positive environmental initiatives make an excellent performance in the environment portfolio. They do not. If the Barnett government were so proud of its environmental record, it would have released regular state of the environment reports, as is the case in other jurisdictions across Australia and overseas, but it has not. It has nothing to report in the environment portfolio—just move along, nothing to report here. The last “State of the Environment Report” was delivered by the former Labor government in 2007.

This government has lurched from one environmental crisis to another. There is a litany of high-profile cases of environmental protection failures. There has been failure to administer environmental regulations and to prosecute those who commit environmental offences. Roe 8 has been riddled with environmental issues and the EPA has failed to adhere to its own policies and guidelines. They are fine for everyone else but the EPA is above them! There has been failure over 12 years to resolve contamination of the Bio-Organics site at Oakford. The Department of Environment's failure saw pollution go unchecked at Oakford for 12 years while causing residents to complain of illness.

A government member interjected.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Yes, there were 12 years of lobbying by the community—12 years of the community reporting illnesses and horrendous odours. There are many, many more examples of these sorts of failures. There has been a litany of process and procedure failures of the EPA, including basic failures such as a lack of understanding of what constitutes a conflict of interest and failure to have in place procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest.

Several members interjected.

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The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon ADELE FARINA: The Barnett government's record is so great that it has revoked or cancelled more than 50 environmental policies and guidelines without public consultation, all in a shroud of secrecy. I will not read out all 50 of them but let me provide a flavour of some of them. There is the position statement on environmental offsets, position statement 1, "Environmental Protection of Cape Range Province" and the "Draft State Environmental (Ambient Air) Policy 2009". The government released the draft but did not go on to do anything with it. It withdrew its position statement on environmental protection and ecological sustainability of the rangelands in Western Australia and its position statement on environmental protection in natural resource management. God forbid that we should do anything on natural resource management! The government has revoked its guidance statement on sampling of subterranean fauna in groundwater and caves. It has withdrawn the guidance statement for management of mosquitoes by land developers. I was not aware that mosquitoes were no longer a problem. It has withdrawn the guidance statement, "Remediation Hierarchy for Contaminated Land". That continues to be a major problem but we no longer have a guidance statement on it. It has withdrawn the "Environmental Protection Bulletin 8—South West Regional Ecological Linkages" and it has revoked the guidance statement "Prevention of Air Quality Impacts from Land Development Sites". The list goes on and on. It has revoked the position statement "Towards Sustainability", although we would think sustainability would feature greatly in the environment portfolio. It has revoked also the "Scott Coastal Plain—a Strategy for a Sustainable Future". Knowing how much effort went into preparing that report, I am sure many farmers in that area would not be pleased to know that it has been dumped in the wastepaper basket. The government has revoked also a number of very important environmental protection policies that were all implemented following extensive community consultation, yet they were revoked with no community consultation and no community notification. I will name three of them—the south west agricultural zones wetlands policy, the Swan coastal plain lakes policy and the Gngangara mound crown land policy. A litany of environmental policies and guidelines have been revoked by this government without any community consultation or notification, but it wants us to accept this motion that it has an excellent performance record in the environment portfolio. Also, a number of big projects approved by the government have shown the minister's complicity in exempting major greenhouse gas emitters from controlling millions of tonnes of emissions per year. One of those projects is Chevron's \$30 billion LNG Wheatstone project, for which there was no mention of controls over emissions. A 2010–11 report shows that WA is the worst producer of waste among all Australian states and territories. I would love to refer to more current reports but the government does not report and it does not release any information, so that is the best I can do. This government has failed to address waste reduction in this state. The only action it has taken is to massively increase landfill waste fees. It is no surprise that as a waste reduction measure that has been a complete failure because it has been more about revenue raising than it has been about waste reduction. We continue to have a massive landfill problem that remains unaddressed by this government.

A lot has been said about marine parks, so let me set the record straight. Sixteen marine protected areas, 14 marine parks, one marine nature reserve and one marine management area have been created in Western Australian waters. Of the 16 marine protected areas, 12 were created under a Labor government and four under a Liberal government. Two extensions occurred some years after the original reserve was created for the Rowley Shoals and Ningaloo Marine Parks and both extensions occurred under a Labor government. Of the four marine parks created under the current Liberal government, the major work for planning and consultation for the Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park and Ngari Capes Marine Park occurred under a Labor government. Planning for the Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park also commenced under a Labor government. Since 2008, the Liberal government has created only Camden Sound Marine Park in its own right and finished off the Walpole and Nornalup Inlets, Ngari Capes and Eighty Mile Beach Marine Parks. Currently, the Roebuck Bay and the North Kimberley proposals are still to be completed. Extensive planning and consultation, including the release of an indicative management plan for the Dampier Archipelago and the Regnard marine management area, occurred during the term of the Gallop and Carpenter Labor governments. That plan has not been progressed or finalised under the Liberal government. There has been no mention of where that has gone. It has just slid off the face of any records. It is probably in that wastepaper bin, together with all the environmental policies that have been put there. The Liberal government has no strategic framework for the creation of marine parks; they have been proposed in an ad hoc fashion.

Hon Donna Faragher: So you don't support them?

Hon ADELE FARINA: I am sorry, but I have just explained that Labor created 14 of them.

Hon Donna Faragher: You're saying that we have just taken an ad hoc approach.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I am saying that the government should have a strategic framework for the creation of marine parks, as it should have a strategic framework for biodiversity protection in this state, which it has also ignored in the 2015 bill.

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A constant theme of the Barnett government in the environment portfolio is a denial of science. The government at every opportunity has either eliminated scientific advisory panels or committees for important environmental legislation or failed to establish them, as is the case in the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015. The government talks about its excellent performance in the environment portfolio, but it does not actually understand that decisions in the environment portfolio need to be science-based. It has absolutely no interest in making decisions based on science. In fact, it has thrown out science-based decision-making in favour of ministerial discretion. There has been more ministerial discretion incorporated in legislation under this government than I think this chamber has ever seen before. It is extraordinary. All that ministerial discretion occurs in a shroud of secrecy. Absolutely no consultation occurs in the exercise of that ministerial discretion. There is no opportunity for public comment and no oversight by Parliament—none whatsoever. This government likes to operate under a shroud of secrecy and on that basis does not consider it needs to be accountable for its decision-making.

The second reading speech of the Biodiversity Conservation Bill informs the house that the government extensively consulted with the community on the bill. The 2005 draft bill, on which there had been extensive community consultation and support, included regional conservation plans, scientific advisory panels and a science hierarchy that would culminate in a biodiversity commission, all of which are absent in the 2015 bill. There is not one mention in the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015 second reading speech that those aspects that had been highly supported by the community in the 2005 draft bill are not included in the 2015 bill. There is not one mention that those things had been eliminated from the draft bill and no explanation or reason was given for doing so. The government is saying that it has an excellent performance record in the environment portfolio when it chooses not to consult, inform and even undertake the most basic of scientific assessments. We hear in this place time and again about the lack of biodiversity audits done by this government, yet we hear how critical they are in the conservation of biodiversity. I think in the last round of estimates hearings we heard that the government had spent more than \$500 000 collecting information, but none of that information is available to the public because it does not want to make that information available to the public. Every other government has made sure that information is collected and is provided to the public so there can be informed, sound decision-making in the environment portfolio. This government operates in a completely different way. It either does not collect the information, does not ask for scientific or expert advice, or if it does, nobody knows what it is. It will not disclose that information to anybody. That is completely unacceptable. If the government thinks it is making great decisions in the environment portfolio, it should stand up and be counted. It should release the information on which its decisions are made, justify its decisions, give reasons for its decisions and be accountable to the Australian public. This government is not doing that. While the government continues to fall short in that area it cannot come to this house and expect widespread support for its so-called excellent performance in the environment portfolio. If we were to talk to anyone involved in community conservation groups, they would disagree with the statement that this government has an excellent record in the environment portfolio. It does not and the mover of the motion failed to present any argument to persuade the house on that point. On that basis I am going to conclude, because I could be here all day going through a list of reasons for why we cannot support the motion before the house. I have given an outline of the reasons that this side of the house will not support the motion. The bottom line is that the government's performance has fallen well short of excellence in the environment portfolio and we will not support this motion.

HON LIZ BEHJAT (North Metropolitan) [2.29 pm]: I am very happy to stand here today to commend the Barnett Liberal government on its achievements in the environment portfolio. Before I talk about the government's achievements and the record on which it stands, I remind people about the three stooges of environment from 2006 through to the time we took over in 2008. I am talking about the three stooges Tony McRae, Mark McGowan and David Templeman and about the Esperance lead debacle that Hon Donna Faragher, the first environment minister on our side, inherited. We know that, for a range of reasons, the opposition had a revolving door of ministers when it was in government, but this was especially so in the environment portfolio.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The opposition does not want to hear about what has now become known as one of the world's absolutely disgraceful environmental disasters—the Esperance lead debacle. Let us talk about that. Who were the ones who presided over it, and who had to come in and fix it up? We had to fix it up. We put the safeguards in place to ensure that there would be no further occurrences of this problem.

Point of Order

Hon ADELE FARINA: I bring a point of order on the basis of standing order 47, which is about relevance. The motion before this house reads —

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

We appreciate that members opposite are struggling to find issues to talk about to justify this motion, but spending all their time debating past decisions of former Labor governments does not exactly fit within the motion. I ask the Acting President to remind speakers on this motion about the importance of relevance.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): I am going to consider this point of order, and there is no debate on a point of order. I will consider the matter before me. I invite the member to speak to the motion, and recognise that she has the call.

Debate Resumed

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Thank you, Madam Acting President. When one makes contributions to debates in this house one likes to set the scene for the flavour of what one is going to talk about. We are going to speak about achievements, so I think the first thing we should do is go right back, because we are talking about the achievements of the government over the entire period of eight years that it has been in office. Let us talk about what we inherited. When Hon Donna Faragher took up her ministerial office on the first day of her appointment as environment minister, what greeted her? It was the Esperance lead debacle. That is what we had to do first. The opposition does not want to be reminded of that, but let us talk about the government's response to it. It is the start of the achievements of this fantastic government in the environment portfolio. I will not go into too much detail, because I know it is absolutely painful to be reminded about what the three stooges did during that time.

Hon Jim Chown: Who were they, again?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Just to remind members, they were Tony McRae, Mark McGowan and David Templeman—the three stooges of the Esperance lead environmental disaster.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! It is one thing to have interjections from the other side of the house; it is another to have interjections from your own side. Hon Liz Behjat has the call, and I would remind members that she alone has the call.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: They are encouraging me in my response, because they too remember the ministerial revolving door. We will talk about that on a different day, because we have a range of motions coming up in the lead-up to the 2017 election under which we can talk about every portfolio in which the government has made really great contributions and changes for the better in this state. We are certainly in a much better environmental position now than we were in 2008 when we took government.

Which government has just done the Kimberley conservation strategy? Is it the Liberal government? Oh, yes—the Kimberley conversation conservation strategy. Which government made sure that all the Kimberley area, for generations—in fact, for hundreds of years to come—will be protected? It was not the former Labor government; the Barnett Liberal government did that. Who made the announcement last weekend about the Abrolhos Islands becoming a conservation area? The Liberal government made that announcement. We can go through achievement after achievement. The opposition says that we do not put out state of the environment reports. What is the annual report of the Department of Parks and Wildlife if not the state of the department? Opposition members come in here with nothing positive to contribute to this debate, and we stand here proudly on our record of achievement.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, member! When I call order, I expect order. You now have the call, prior to me calling order.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I know it is very painful for members opposite to hear what I am saying.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Thank you, Madam Acting President.

Members who have been here as long as I have will recall that I have spoken in this place before about the container deposit scheme. I have to say that I was not speaking in favour of it at that time.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You changed your tune today.

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Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Yes, because I am very happy to say that if things change in the way that we want them to change, we can then admit we were wrong and say that we are now right. Today we have seen the announcement that has been the subject of discussions in the party room for a very long time. I can assure members that today's announcement did not come as a surprise over our Weeties this morning. We knew that it was happening; we knew that the announcement was being made. However, at the time I spoke about it I opposed it. I still have a couple of concerns that I will put on the record. I am concerned about community groups collecting and taking empty containers. That is a big concern to me from a health point of view. That is why I think there will probably be quite a long lead-in period; there are some issues to address. I remember my good friend Hon Donna Faragher, the environment minister at the time, and I having quite strong words about it. She was looking at doing it, but said that we needed to have a national scheme and that we should delay the introduction of this scheme waiting for a national scheme. We have not gone to a national scheme, and I am quite pleased to say that because, as a true federalist, I believe it is really up to the states to act on this matter. We now see that most of the states are going to act on this, so Western Australia will do so by the middle of 2018. Again, it is an achievement that the government will be introducing a container deposit scheme, and I can see that members are all very excited about it.

I have so many notes here about the achievements in the environment portfolio that it is really hard to know which one to speak about first. Let us talk about parks for people and what the government has done about that. There is a beautiful park in the North Metropolitan Region, which I represent, and that is Yanchep National Park. Hands up who has not been to Yanchep National Park. Everybody has been there, but hands up who has pitched a tent in Yanchep National Park. Can we do it now? Yes, we can, and why can we do that? It is because the Liberal-National government introduced a scheme under which we can go camping in our national parks.

Hon Jim Chown: What a great idea.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: What a great achievement. I cannot wait to go and pitch my tent up there and have a really great night out in Yanchep National Park. Even the Acting President is excited. Maybe we can go and have a parliamentary pyjama party at Yanchep National Park, and we will all go and pitch our tents. Will that not be fun? We will get the Greens to come along and we will sit around the campfire singing *Kumbaya*. Love it! We are all going to be doing that. It is an achievement of this government in the environment portfolio. That is a \$21.05 million initiative that is part of our \$43.5 million Western Australian caravanning and camping action plan, which my friend the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Tourism is very familiar with, because I believe she was quite instrumental in writing the policy and adapting it, together with our Minister for Tourism, in the review of what was going on. We are delivering, not only in Yanchep National Park, in case people do not want to come to the North Metropolitan Region—I cannot understand why they would not—450 new camping and caravan sites, and we are upgrading accommodation in 16 national parks and reserves throughout Western Australia. I am sure that members will be able to find somewhere to go camping in a national park thanks to the Liberal government and its environment strategy. That commitment builds on \$60 million we have already provided to improve facilities since 2008.

Another important part of environmental conservation is employment and the opportunities that that presents to our people and the spin-offs in tourism. I am sure that my friend the parliamentary secretary for tourism will have lots to contribute to this debate, but time will probably run out before she gets to make her contribution. One of our really important achievements has been the employment of Aboriginals in conservation. Since 2008 the support for Aboriginal ranger employment has skyrocketed. When we came to the government benches in 2008 I think that 15 Aboriginal rangers were employed—the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs might be able to remind me of the number. He is obviously too busy on parliamentary business at the moment to respond to my rhetorical question, but I think he nodded. I think we now have 200 Aboriginal rangers working on country, so it has gone from 15 to 200—am I right?

Hon Peter Collier: Over 200.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Yes, the minister was just checking the figures.

Hon Peter Collier: I was thinking of my mum. She is not well.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Then please pass on our best to her.

We have gone from employing 15 Aboriginal rangers to employing 200. In anyone's language that is an achievement, which is what we are talking about today—the achievements of this Liberal government in the environment portfolio. That is a very good achievement. There is a lot of brevity going on in my contribution but that is certainly one of the important achievements. During one of my committee's parliamentary inquiries into the pastoral lease situation, we went around the Kimberley and to areas like Prap Prap. The Aboriginal rangers

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employed there were very proud to be gainfully employed. It is certainly one achievement that we can pat ourselves on the back for. Three very large national parks have been created since 2008 —

Hon Peter Collier: How many?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Three very large national parks—Dirk Hartog Island National Park, Prince Regent National Park and Murujuga National Park—which brings our total number of parks to 100. Just this weekend we heard about the new Abrolhos Islands national park, which will take the number up to 101 national parks. Yesterday Hon Rick Mazza, in his contribution to the biodiversity legislation, talked about the importance of the marine environment. That issue is taken very seriously by this government, which has created four new marine parks—Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park, Ngari Capes Marine Park, Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park and Camden Sound Marine Park.

I am sure the parliamentary secretary is champing at the bit to outline the amazing synergies between tourism and the environment. We know that ecotourism is the way of the future. On a recent trip I took to the United States people there were keen to talk to us about swimming with the whale sharks and whale spotting; all the things for which we are becoming world famous. One of the good things about this government is that our departments speak to each other and there is a great synergy between tourism and environment, evidenced by our achievements in those areas. The creation of the proposed new marine reserves will increase the total area of the state's marine parks and reserves from approximately 1.5 million hectares to over five million hectares since this government came into office, which is more than a 200 per cent increase. That is an achievement. I am ticking off the achievements of the Barnett government since 2008. Now that we are moving into the last six or seven months prior to an election there will be more focus and other announcements, but we need to keep reminding ourselves of those achievements over that time. We are creating Australia's largest national park at the Mitchell Plateau, which will span more than 20 000 square kilometres. I am sure Hon Stephen Dawson is very familiar with that part of his electorate and places there such as Horizontal Falls, Karijini National Park and the Gibb River Road. Just the other day I had a conversation with my very good friend—I am going to be a name-dropper—Professor Barry Marshall, the Nobel laureate, whom I sit with on the executive committee of the Neurotrauma Research Program. He recently travelled on the Gibb River Road and told me how magnificent it is up there and what a wonderful resource we have. In fact, just this week, he wrote to the Minister for Environment about drone activity in that area. He is an avid drone enthusiast. What do you call them? I do not want to say he is a “droner”!

Hon Sue Ellery: I could think of a few things.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Could you? What might they be?

Hon Sue Ellery: It is best not shared.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Let me just call him a drone enthusiast. He said that one thing we could do is allow people to take drones into that region and send back footage of the wonderful sites for people who are not able to go four-wheel driving on the Gibb River Road. It is certainly one of the things on my bucket list. We have talked about Roebuck Bay in the Kimberley. A great announcement was made for that region to bitumenise the road, which will be a great boon to the Aboriginal communities there. The tourism dollar is certainly very welcome in those areas. Now that the road has been sealed, more grey nomads can go there, which will certainly contribute a lot to the tourism strategy. Again, that all helps the environment portfolio because these areas need to be accessible to be protected. We have also delivered some phenomenal nature-based activities. Recently in Albany's national park, world-class lookouts at The Gap and Natural Bridge were opened. In the first two weeks of opening those sites had 20 000 visits and I am sure that will continue as the weather gets nicer.

They are just a few of the points to be made on the environment portfolio in which we have certainly made a difference. We can talk about the environment portfolio in terms of not only tourism, national parks and camping, but also threatened species. The management of threatened species is another great achievement of this government because we recognise the importance of protecting and recovering the state's threatened species and improving their conservation status. I do not have any fluffy toys or plants for show-and-tell this afternoon, as did other members when talking on a similar subject. However, since taking office in 2008 this government has invested in a number of programs that benefit the recovery of threatened species including the provision of around \$30 million worth of initiatives under the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy for fire management, unmanaged cattle and weed control; around \$7.8 million for cane toad control; \$330 000 for western ground parrot recovery in the south west of the state; and a \$500 000 program of targeted conservation initiatives for woylies and numbats involving enhanced feral cat control.

Members will recall that as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Administration I was charged with the duty to conduct the inquiry into the proposal to introduce recreational hunting in certain areas of the state to assist in the control of feral animals. One thing we noticed as we travelled around the state was not only the great

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damage done by feral animals, but also the steps now being taken by our department to manage the feral animal problem and the inroads being made, which again is an achievement of this government. The Red Card for Rabbits and Foxes program has also been extended. Collaboration is now going on between recreational hunting groups and the department to assist in feral animal control, and we know that will be of great benefit to our pastoralists in that region and certainly in the areas where we saw that damage had been done. Again, that is an achievement of the Barnett Liberal government in the environment portfolio.

Since 2008, \$34 million has been invested by this government through environmental offsets linked to departmental approvals to protect Western Australia's three threatened species of black cockatoos. I know that a lot of work is going on in the urban environment in the area in the northern suburbs where I live and the area around it, especially north of Wanneroo. It is not just the great vastness of our state that we need to protect from an environmental point of view; there is also the urban environment. Certainly, the black cockatoo program is very well established and recognised and people have seen a lot of black cockatoos returning. I am not such a big fan of the white cockatoos. They destroy my olive trees every summer. We have the only olive trees in the street, so we seem to be the only house that attracts these birds. However, the black cockatoos are very welcome. I seem to recall that on the day that the former environment minister gave birth to her first child, the gorgeous Clare, who is now a few years old, I represented her at Murdoch University to talk about the black cockatoo program and the conservation program that we were undertaking. That is a very fond memory for me. I was able to talk about a program that our government was introducing. I think young Clare is probably about six years old, so the program would be six years along. It is doing very well and we are seeing great achievements. That is an achievement that this government has made over time. It is not just something that we announced last week and it is not just something that we announced and did not do anything about; it is something that we have been able to track and we have good statistics on what has happened in that area. We purchased 20 000 hectares of Carnaby's cockatoo habitat at that time for inclusion in the conservation estate and the rehabilitation of the habitat. Some really great research programs are also going on throughout the university. I was talking to people at Murdoch University recently. People are coming from overseas to study what we are doing with the conservation of Carnaby's black cockatoos, so we are certainly getting well known on the world stage. That is because it is one of the achievements of the Barnett Liberal government in the environment portfolio, which is the subject of our debate today.

I have spoken very briefly about the feral animal control program. In particular, we know that 1080, one of the most effective baits for feral animals, has been used quite widely in areas, but, again, through advances in research and innovation, which of course is very important, 1080 has been developed into another product called Eradicat, which helps in the eradication of feral cats. That is done through the Western Shield native animal conservation program. In December 2014, we approved the use of Eradicat feral cat baits throughout the region. Eradicat is taken up by not just feral cats, but also foxes. Fifty-three threatened mammals, birds and reptiles in those areas are now coming back in greater numbers because we have been able to eradicate the feral animals at those sites with Eradicat.

I will move on to another area. The strategic assessment green growth plan is another achievement of the Barnett government in the environment portfolio. We have recently released for public comment the "Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million", which supports sustainable population growth to 3.5 million people by 2050. We know that that is the target population that will be reached by that time. We need to put in place all sorts of programs to ensure that while the population grows, the environment remains sustainable. As part of the Perth–Peel region plan, we have committed to 170 000 hectares of new conservation area in the Perth–Peel region and surrounds, which is one of the largest expansions of a reserve system surrounding a capital city ever undertaken. Who has it been undertaken by? It has been undertaken by the Barnett Liberal government. We are certainly making great inroads in that area. Again, we will add that to the list of achievements. I hope that when I finish speaking, somebody goes through and ticks off the number of achievements that I have spoken about in this contribution. I think that was one of the criticisms levied at us earlier in the debate. There is so much for us to speak about that it is difficult to enumerate them exactly in the time given to us. Over that period of eight years—eight years is a long time—we have certainly not rested on our laurels. We have had very effective environment ministers during that time. With the strategic assessment green growth plan, we know that ad hoc development cannot be supported, things cannot just happen without a proper plan being put in place and people cannot just be allowed to do what they want to do. We need to make sure that that is done in an environmentally sustainable manner. That is why the whole thing is out for consultation—a word that we like to use because we do lots of consulting when we put things in place. We have been doing that for this program to find out what people want to do and how they want to assist us in making Western Australia more environmentally sustainable in the future.

We know that the Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2015 is creating some angst. We know that the Labor Party does not want to support the most comprehensive environmental protection legislation that has been put before

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this Parliament in more than 60 years, but we are happy to stand on our record and say that we will provide Western Australia with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to replace the outdated and deficient Wildlife Conservation Act. We are in the process of doing that now. This legislation will bring conservation biodiversity in our state into this century. It is contemporary legislation. I am very happy to be part of the government that has introduced it and I will be happy to support it at the right time. A lot of consultation has gone on with successive governments over decades and they have promised to do something about it but have not been able to achieve it. Let us face it; it is a huge task to do something like that, but we are the ones who have been able to achieve it. We will see a great environmental strategy for this state going forward into the future.

That is, in a nutshell, the very small contribution I can make to the motion about our achievements in the environment portfolio. We have a proud record to stand on. I am happy to stand on the government bench and say that I am a member of this team. I may not be here in the next Parliament, but future generations will be and we will certainly be occupying the government benches post March 2017, and I am sure that we will add to the fantastic achievements in the environment portfolio that we have made over the past eight years. I thank Hon Simon O'Brien for bringing this motion to the house so that we could stand very proudly on our record and say, "We are the environmentalists in this house. We are the conservationists in this house. We are the government that looks after this state. We are the government that has done more for the environment than any other government has ever done." I am very proud to be part of the Barnett Liberal government that has achieved that.

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan) [3.00 pm]: I am also really pleased to have the opportunity to stand and commend the government for its fantastic achievement in the area of environment. What a fantastic change it is to come to the end of "condemnitis" and to the beginning of "commenditis".

Several members interjected.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We are so pleased that we have got rid of all the motions that were about condemning this, that and the other but meaning nothing. Now we can start to talk about the real things that this government has achieved and commend the government for its terrific achievement in this area.

Hon Peter Collier: They can't respond.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Members opposite cannot respond because they find it too difficult to be in that frame of commending the government for good work.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon HELEN MORTON: Madam Acting President, can I just add to that interjection by saying it is an absolute pleasure to have the opportunity to talk nonstop now until Parliament rises about how good this government is and how it will continue to do the very positive work that it is doing for Western Australia throughout every portfolio. It is doing fantastic work for Western Australians all over the state.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! I will encourage members not to invite interjections to their contribution.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Thank you, Madam Acting President. However, we will respond to interjections should they be made.

I have to reiterate that this government is to be congratulated for many, many good things across the whole of the eight years that we have been in government. From my point of view, probably the greatest achievement is the fantastic balance that this government has brought to the three areas of economic, social and environmental achievement. Again we say that a truly great government for all the people of Western Australia brings those things into balance. Terrific initiatives, great investments, wonderful successes and amazing resources have been put to good use in these three areas of work.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am surprised that opposition members are not agreeing with me about this, because it is about the triple bottom line and the balance that is needed to make a good government work. There are times when people have to focus on jobs, as we have done in Western Australia. We have created many jobs through the capital building projects that we have undertaken. At last we have won the argument with the federal government about the goods and services tax. We have managed to create all the necessary services for the increasing population over the term of this government. We have done a great job in creating and choosing the right priorities for the economy of Western Australia.

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In the social area—again, just looking at that balance between the economic, social and environmental areas—there has been massive growth in health development, health buildings, education and mental health services. We have created the Mental Health Commission and rolled out the National Disability Insurance Scheme across the state. We have also done work in child protection. I understand that it was not the wish of the former Labor Minister for Child Protection to see the mess that child protection was in, but it was in a mess and it was acknowledged as such. The Ford review brought it up and showed it again. Once again, the balance between the environment, the social and the economic is not —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, member!

Point of Order

Hon SUE ELLERY: My point of order relates to the standing order about relevance. I make this point as well in the point of order: the speaker has just stood and said that she is glad that the end of “condemnitis” has come, and then has launched into the condemnation of child protection, which has nothing to do with the motion that is before the house today.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy): Order! Your playtime is now over. Thank you. The member has raised a point of order. I will invite the member on her feet to ensure that her comments are directly related to the motion before us.

Debate Resumed

Hon HELEN MORTON: Thank you very much, Madam Acting President. Some very naive people in this room do not understand the balance between good economic, social and environmental agendas. Until the Labor Party really understands that balance, it will never be able to govern this state for all Western Australians. Labor Party members deserve to stay on the opposition benches and, hopefully, will do so for many, many years to come. Fancy not having an understanding of the balance between those three economic, social and environment agendas and initiatives! What a naive opposition. Labor has never been able to govern successfully and now it cannot even be an opposition successfully. That is really condemning to Labor members. I am sorry I brought up the “condemnitis” word, but I condemn the Labor Party for being in the position that it cannot be an effective opposition, let alone a government.

Hon Sue Ellery: Why are you over there? That is right; you got dumped! That’s how good a minister you are. That is why you are sitting over there.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon HELEN MORTON: Do you have any idea? The member has no idea what took place. The member thinks she knows what happened and that is fine.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! It is usual practice when the Chair calls for order that the speaker on their feet sits. I invite members to take a deep breath and then I give the call to Hon Helen Morton.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon HELEN MORTON: Do you want me to sit again? Sorry; I am not sure when to sit and when to stand now.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Member, let me run you through it one more time. When you are given the call, you stand. When order is called, you sit.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Thank you very much.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: You are very welcome. Members, I will invite you to listen to the contribution made by Hon Helen Morton, to whom I give the call.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I may stand. Thank you.

I have gone through the balance between the economic, social and environmental initiatives and resources and successes of this government. I want to now focus on the environmental successes of this government. We are delivering environmental initiatives across the state, the extent of which has never been seen before under any government prior to the Barnett government. Let us not have any misunderstanding that the Labor government or the Greens and Labor together have been able to previously achieve something like this in this area, because this government is unprecedented in every respect. In this state, national parks have increased by up to 100 000 hectares with three new national parks—Dirk Hartog Island, Prince Regent and Murujuga. I want to

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focus a bit later on one particular park, Dirk Hartog Island National Park. Four new marine parks have already been established and three more are in development. Marine park hectares have increased. Regardless of the numbers, remember this: marine park hectares have increased from 1.5 million hectares to over five million hectares. That is a 200 per cent increase in marine park area because of this government. We cannot even begin to imagine the extent of that increase in marine park area implemented by this government when we are talking about those sorts of figures.

We are creating the largest national park in Australia. How could we not commend the government for this work? We are creating the largest national park in the whole of Australia, Mitchell Plateau, which will span more than 20 000 square kilometres.

I am going to reiterate other areas that many of our other speakers have already covered, like the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, which is the largest conservation project ever undertaken in Western Australia. How could members opposite not commend the government for that? The \$103 million investment is an unprecedented commitment to the protection of our incredible, invaluable natural, cultural and heritage assets of the Kimberley. Why not commend the government for that?

I will not go through all the amendments to the Conservation and Land Management Act, but I will mention the biodiversity bill. Under the Liberal–National government, for the first time in Western Australia, the listing and protection of threatened and critical habitats will be recognised by law. Why would members not commend us for that? I have a particular interest in the sandalwood provision, having pulled over 1 000 tonnes of native sandalwood from our own property.

Hon Simon O'Brien: With a licence, I hope!

Hon HELEN MORTON: Yes, with a licence.

The Sandalwood Act 1929 contains a maximum penalty of only \$200 for smuggling sandalwood. We had numerous calls on us to provide sandalwood illegally to people who would have liked to have flouted the law. Now, the penalty has increased from \$200 to \$200 000, which will increase to \$1 million for corporations. Why not commend the government for that? Opposition members say that they cannot find anything to commend the government for doing, but I am giving them examples of things that they can commend the government for doing.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon HELEN MORTON: The Swan River Trust amalgamation strengthened the management of Western Australia's environment and river parks and reduced the unnecessary duplication of roles. Why not commend the government for that?

We are delivering 450 new camping and caravan sites. When I was on holiday in Western Australia in July, I could not believe the number of people traveling with their caravans behind them in the northern areas of the state. If honourable members are patient for just a few moments, soon they will hear how I joined them.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Again, I encourage the honourable member not to invite interjections and for other members not to interject.

Hon HELEN MORTON: On the Swan and Canning Rivers, terrific progress has been made in nutrient-stripping wetlands in the Ellenbrook and Bayswater catchments. These areas impact all of us in the East Metropolitan Region, so why would the whole East Metropolitan Region not commend the government for this? I call on my East Metropolitan Region colleagues on the other side of the house to get up and commend the government for the terrific work that has been done in this area. The investment of \$9.2 million in more than 100 river restoration projects and the provision of more than \$5 million in nutrient-stripping wetlands are again reasons to commend the government.

On threatened species management, I thought it was worthwhile mentioning the recovery of threatened species. The government has provided around \$30 million for initiatives in the Kimberley science and conservation strategy for fire management and unmanaged cattle and weed control; around \$7.8 million for cane toad control; \$330 million for the western ground parrot recovery in the south west of the state; and, \$500 000 for programs to target conservation initiatives for woylies—the previous Minister for Environment's pet animal—and numbats, including enhanced feral cat control. Foxes are a problem in my neck of the woods, in the Pingelly–Wandering area, where I have a farm, but their numbers have been reduced by more than 50 per cent in the time of this government, and that problem has gone right down. Under the Western Shield program, integrated feral cat and

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fox control measures to protect native animals are now possible throughout the state, and it has really progressed under this government. I cannot even begin to imagine why members opposite do not want to commend the government for that. Fox numbers have been reduced by at least 55 per cent in baited areas across the south west. Do members have any idea of the problems these foxes have been causing? Why not commend a 55 per cent reduction in the number of foxes in these areas?

Hon Sally Talbot: How is that done?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is done with baits.

Several members interjected.

Hon HELEN MORTON: If members think that I have no idea how to go about baiting, I have been in aeroplanes baiting feral animals and on the ground baiting animals. I have been out baiting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Time out.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Unfortunately, Madam Acting President, I will not be able to finish my speech today, because I have only 11 seconds left. I really did want to get on to talk about Dirk Hartog Island.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.