

STRATEGIC CONSERVATION FUND

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

I refer to the ministerial approval statement signed by the minister that allowed multiple mining-related projects to proceed on the condition that the proponents contribute to a strategic conservation fund.

- (1) Given that the minister has signed these statements and the mining companies have agreed to pay the money into the fund, why can he not complete the simple task of establishing the fund?
- (2) How much money is intended to flow through this fund?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

- (1)–(2) I believe that the member for Gosnells raised this issue in *The Sunday Times* a couple of weeks ago. Essentially, I think the member is mixing up his jelly and his custard a little. There are two very separate distinct issues.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, ably assisted by the member for Girrawheen, I call you both to order for the first time.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The member is correct; a range of mining approvals or ministerial statements have been issued for projects in the Pilbara. In many instances, these have required offsets to be delivered. Those companies will absolutely have to deliver on those offsets. That is not in question for a second. To explain what offsets means, offsets are essentially when there is a trade-off for environmental values, and that trade-off needs to be met. First, that trade-off can be met by immediate mitigation on the project itself; second, it can be met via like for like—acquiring land with similar environmental values, which immediately offsets it—and the third level, which should not be the first priority, is for monetary offsets.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Have you signed off on that?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Member for Gosnells, I will give you a supplementary question. Minister, answer the question, please.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said, all those companies will be required to meet those offsets. The Environmental Protection Authority issued a recommendation that as those offsets accumulate across the Pilbara, they could be delivered through a strategic fund or initiative that pools that offset funding and applies it to a strategic or a Pilbara-wide facility. That idea certainly has very strong merit and it is an idea that the government is actively exploring. That is a separate issue. The first issue is offsets. Offsets will be required. The second issue is whether we pool all those offsets from a variety of companies and deliver it as one package through one account. That certainly has very strong merit and is being explored. However, such a fund will ultimately pool with a lot of money. It will have a lot of responsibility and it will need a robust governance framework around it. That work is being done. I again say—the member got this well and truly mixed up—that every one of those companies will be required to deliver on their offsets.