

PLAN FOR OUR PARKS

83. Ms E.J. KELSIE to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's Plan for Our Parks, creating five million hectares of new national and marine parks across the state.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the establishment of the south coast marine park?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this new marine park will deliver ecological conservation efforts while ensuring ongoing recreational and commercial activities?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Warren–Blackwood for her question and for her passionate support of our environment, especially in the great part of Western Australia that she represents. I know she has a deep and abiding passion for all things marine and is a great enthusiast of her local surf lifesaving club. The south coast marine park, as the member rightly points out, is a massive step forward for our environment. It is a beautiful and unique place. It harbours some of the rarest creatures and marine life that one could ever imagine—animals, fish and plants that occur nowhere else. At the moment, less than one per cent of that valuable marinescape is protected. That needs to be changed, and Western Australians are supportive of protecting our environment, both on land and in the sea.

On Friday, I had the pleasure of going to Esperance and meeting a number of people. I was with the local member there, Hon Shelley Payne —

Mr R.S. Love: She's not the local member.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: She is one of the local members. She is actually very local. Her husband is involved in commercial fishing. She lives and breathes Esperance.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: Thanks for the contribution, member.

This is a wonderful step forward. It is a significant step forward to protect the Western Australian environment and —

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: Thank you. Yes, there will opportunity for public comment. I hope the member will have his say and I encourage as many people as possible to have their say.

I was in Esperance with other local people. I met Alan and Callum Wilson, who have invested their life in commercial fisheries in the Esperance region. They are generational abalone families. They are part of this process. They are looking at the indicative maps. The indicative maps were released on Friday. It is a very impressive piece of information. The information on the website provides granular detail about the maps and zones. It provides an idea of what impact there might be on commercial or recreational fishers or tourists. It also provides an idea of what the opportunities are—which parts of the south coast will be protected and what will be open to all the wonderful things that happen there at the moment. Alan and Callum are abalone fishers and they sat down with me. We had the maps rolled out, looked at the detail of the sanctuary zones, and suggestions were made such as, "We could pull that one back here", "That is a valuable diversity hotspot over there" and "This one works better for fishing; can we move it over?" That in-depth, detailed analysis of the maps means that this process is not over yet. We have already made a number of concessions to commercial and recreational fishers that change sanctuary zones. We are moving some and reducing others, and we continue to do that work. For the next four months, the entire community of Western Australia is welcome to go online and have a look at the maps and what the marine park means. If there is any feedback that we need to make this an even better marine park for the future, I urge everyone to provide it.

The statutory requirement for consultation is three months; I have extended it to four months because this is an important marine park and we want to get it right. I will conclude by quoting the Tourism Council of Western Australia. Whenever we open a marine park or a national park, the contribution to the economic vitality of Western Australia through tourism is an important question.

In a media release, the Tourism Council stated —

Tourism Council WA welcomes the State Government's proposed South Coast Marine Park, which will provide new opportunities for nature-based tourism.

Chief Executive Officer Evan Hall said the industry body supported the reservation of National Parks and Marine Parks to protect the environment and protect ongoing visitor access, enjoyment and appreciation of WA's natural environment.

“Tourism Council WA backs the indicative management plans’ intention of maintaining current beach and coastal access for visitors such as through camping,” ...

That is an endorsement from the Tourism Council and I will continue to consult with all stakeholders. We want the best possible outcome. The process is not over. It is still in progress, and the opportunity for public consultation and comment is open until 16 June. Thank you for the question.