

TOURISM — HORIZONTAL FALLS

304. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to comments made by the minister on 6PR regarding community and industry reaction to the government's decision to ban commercial boat crossings through the world-famous Western Australian attraction called Horizontal Falls.

- (1) Did the minister request the Broome Chamber of Commerce and Industry to facilitate the meeting on 22 March 2024 referred to in his comments to the media?
- (2) If yes to (1), did the minister's office make recommendations as to whom would be invited?
- (3) Has the minister received any correspondence from any organisations present at that meeting regarding the minister's mischaracterisation of their views on the closure of the falls?
- (4) Does the minister still stand by his assertions made on 6PR on 25 March that there is consensus from the Shire of Broome, tourism operators, the chamber and the Broome Visitor Centre that supports the minister's decision, when those organisations have subsequently expressed that this was not their view?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment, I provide the following answer.

- (1) The minister's office and a representative of the Broome Chamber of Commerce and Industry discussed the opportunity for the minister to meet with key local businesses and stakeholders that had an interest in the future of tourism at Horizontal Falls.
- (2) The Broome Chamber of Commerce recommended which local businesses and stakeholders should be invited.
- (3) Here is the kicker. On 26 March, the minister received correspondence from the Shire of Broome advising that it did not have a formal position on the government's decision to phase out traversal of the falls.
- (4) The meeting of businesses and local stakeholders on 22 March was respectful, positive and productive. During that meeting, attendees overwhelmingly supported the need to work together in partnership with government and traditional owners to develop new tour products that would ensure that Horizontal Falls remains a world-class tourism destination into the future.