

Dr Steve Thomas; Mr John Day; Mr Terry Redman; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Mark McGowan; Mrs Judy Hughes;
Mrs Carol Martin; Ms Dianne Guise; Acting Speaker; Mr Bob Kucera

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE - DRAFT REPORT

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): Today I received a letter from the member for Capel seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this house condemns the state government for its lack of action and long-term vision on the environmental damage occurring in this state as identified by the draft "State of the Environment report" 2006.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

DR S.C. THOMAS (Capel) [2.51 pm]: I move the motion.

Members will notice that, having been given a very serious piece of advice last week, rather than going to Harvey Norman, I used the mirror I have in my house. I had a fairly good look at myself and discovered that I needed a haircut! Members will notice that I have taken that piece of advice on board. That was the only thing I noticed that was particularly untoward. I had a haircut but that was not particularly sustaining in the long term. I instead applied a magnifying glass, rather than a mirror to the government and the Minister for the Environment. A magnifying glass is needed to find the Minister for the Environment. I will not tell members where they need to direct it! A magnifying glass is needed to look for the policies and the commitment of this government and the minister to the long-term improvement of the environment in this state. They are very hard to find. I suggest that if members wanted to find the commitment of the minister and the government to the environment in this state and its long-term health, they would need a fairly strong binocular microscope.

I will refer today to the draft "State of the Environment report". It is a very good document that has been put out by the Environmental Protection Authority. In the limited time I have available I will speak about the eight five-star issues that the draft environment report states are the most distressing to the environment in this state. Generally speaking, it could be said that every five-star issue for the environment is a one-star issue concerning the performance of the government. If we were giving an outcomes-based assessment of the government's performance, it would probably be a level 1. The government recognises that it exists, but it is not doing a heck of a lot about it.

The document is an indictment on the lack of commitment of the government to the environment. It is to the shame of the Labor Party in this state. The first area concerns biodiversity. The first five-star issue is weeds. We find weeds and introduced species growing abundantly throughout the south west. They may as well be propagated. Arum lilies are found throughout the south west. That is only one species; we could talk about blackberries or a number of other species. Arum lilies are like the environmental credentials of the Labor Party in this state: they look nice and green from a distance but they are toxic if you swallow them! The weeds are growing freely in many of the state forests throughout the south west. The government is almost powerless to do anything about it. However, it does perimeter spray. The area around the state forest is sprayed, while the farmer on adjacent farmland has brought the problem under control. The state government sprays around the outside of the state forest because that is all it has the commitment to do. The problem is hidden in the middle of the forest. Arum lilies spread down watercourses, so the spray just washes away and the problem starts to spread. The capes area in the south west is one of the world biodiversity hot spots and is being overrun by a number of species, of which the arum lily is one. This government has closed its eyes to the problem. That is an indictment of the government. It has no long-term plan to remove these plants, and the question must be asked whether the government is just trying to hide the problem.

I could talk about blackberries and other plant species, but I will move on and talk about a second five-star issue in which the government gets one star - feral animals. I will not talk about the wild dog problem because other members will probably discuss that. The member for Roe might have an opportunity to say something on that issue. The state government has decided to put that problem in the too-hard basket. Its performance on feral animals and its long-term strategy on wild dogs are appalling and ridiculous. At least the government has some idea of what it intends to do about that issue, but what is the strategy for dealing with feral cats? A very good study was done last year about biodiversity in the Pilbara, probably near your electorate, Mr Speaker. There are many unusual things in that area. There are many species that have not been identified, but what else is up there, apart from you, Mr Speaker? There is a feral animal there - the domestic mouse, or *Mus musculus*. What is the government's policy on getting rid of feral animals? What will it do about rats and mice, apart from endorse

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them for preselection? It has no policy; it does not know which direction it is taking, and it is putting the environment of this state at risk.

The issue of cane toads is popular at the moment. Cane toads would not be thought of as sexy, but their encroachment is a popular issue that is gaining mileage. The government's response to the cane toad problem is that it must be seen to be doing something about it, if not actually doing anything. It gives half a million dollars to a Perth-based group that is a mate of the government and has helped it politically in the past. It also runs a television campaign, brought to us by the state government. Not many toads have seen the televisions ads, and they would probably not be too impressed if they had. How many toads are those ads stopping? Not many. All the work is being done by volunteers in the Kimberley, and they are getting nothing from the state government. This government is about politics and media opportunities, and it does not care about the environment. The cane toad issue is a prime example of that.

The "State of the Environment report: Western Australia draft 2006", on the issues of introduced plant and animals, states that the government will implement the environmental weed strategy. What is it doing now? Not much. When the report does not refer to implementing a strategy because not much is being done at the moment, it calls for a strategy to be made up. This government is stuck in the position in which it either makes up a strategy on the run or it does nothing.

I will go through the rest of the list. What can I say about phytophthora, or dieback? The draft "State of the Environment report" states that phytophthora continues to affect the south west, eliminating or degrading whole ecosystems. It is another one of the top eight issues. It is a five-star problem with a one-star response. This government has been neglectful in its attack on dieback. Previous governments have made it a target of assault, but this government has no idea what it will do in the future about dieback. Another of the five-star environmental problems that this state is facing is climate change. That is a serious issue. The government rates that as the number one issue. However, what is the government's response to climate change? The minister is not quite sure. For the past month or so the Liberal Party has been talking in this house about greenhouse gases. We asked questions about this matter during the budget estimates, and we have also asked a question during questions without notice. A federal government report has stated that the greenhouse gas emissions in this state comprise 12 per cent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in this country. The response of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to that report was that Western Australia comprises 10 per cent of the population of this country. We comprise 10 per cent of the population of this country, yet we produce 12 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions. The Minister for the Environment's response was that he did not know where the gases were coming from, so he was not sure what he was going to do about it. However, he plans to do some work and come up with a plan! That plan will be a fair way down the track. This is another example of how this government has been delivering a one-star response to a five-star problem.

Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are both five-star issues. Another five-star issue in this state is nuclear power. The government would prefer to bury its head in the sand and not deal with that issue. It does not believe this state needs to have a debate about nuclear issues. The government has almost gone quiet on nuclear issues and greenhouse gases, because it is frightened that it will have to come up with a long-term plan. Again, that is an embarrassment for this state.

Another five-star issue is population consumption. The government has no idea how to address this issue. The minister may be able to get some direction on this matter from the draft "State of the Environment report". That report recommends to the government that it implement the state sustainability strategy. The government is not doing much at the moment to implement that strategy.

Unfortunately in an MPI we have limited time. However, it is important that I deal with one other five-star issue to which the government has been delivering a one-star response. That issue is land and waterways salinity. Salinity is a curse upon this state. There is absolutely no doubt that this state is the salinity capital of Australia. I will leave other members to talk about dryland salinity in particular, because I am sure many members would like to contribute to that debate. I will talk briefly about waterways salinity. The "State of the Environment report" does contain some positives. However, it is generally damning of the government's performance. The government's performance has certainly been very average. The report states that in two of the waterways in this state - the Collie River and the Denmark River - the salinity level has actually gone down. I am sure the minister is well aware of that. We need to look at why the salinity level in those rivers has gone down. Perhaps the government can take that on as a policy and try to replicate that result in other waterways in this state. The reason the salinity level in those rivers has gone down is that we have stopped the clearing of timber in the catchment areas of those rivers, and increased the amount of reforestation, particularly in plantation forests. That was a difficult political decision to make. It was unpopular at the time. People did not want to stop clearing their land. However, that has resulted in a turnaround in the salinity level of those rivers. That decision was made by the Court government - not the Richard Court government, the most recent one, but the Charles

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Court government. One of the few things on which the government can hang its hat and say it has had some environmental success is that 25-year-old Liberal Party policy. Someone had to make the tough decision. That decision was made by the Charles Court government. However, what has happened in the past six years? The government has been trotting out decisions that are popular with the media, while at the same time it has been presiding over the destruction of the environment of this state. The government's response to the issues I have raised has been paltry. The government has not taken the environment seriously. That is an embarrassment to the Labor Party in this state.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Darling Range) [3.05 pm]: I am happy to support the motion, because it raises important issues about the Labor government's approach to major environmental issues in Western Australia. It has become very clear over the past five and a half years that although the Labor Party presents itself as the great saviour of the environment in Western Australia, the reality is very different from that. As with many things this government does, there is a lot more spin than substance. That is the case particularly when it comes to environmental issues. The government is happy to make a hero of itself in dealing with icon-type issues such as Ningaloo Reef or the logging of old-growth forests. However, when it comes to dealing with the longer term issues that require a lot of hard work behind the scenes, the response of this Labor government has been very much lacking.

That is demonstrated to a large extent by the advice that is given in the very comprehensive "State of the Environment report: Western Australia draft 2006", which was published recently by the Environmental Protection Agency. I turn now to some of the key findings in that report that are relevant to water issues. At page 93, under the section headed "Salinisation of inland waters", the "Key findings" state -

- Over 50% of water discharging from South West waterways is salt-affected.
- Salinity levels in many major South West rivers are still rising, but improvements have been made in the Collie and Denmark rivers.

That is very positive, of course. It concludes -

- Salinity monitoring has fallen by about a third over the last five years.

That just happens to coincide with the period during which the Labor Party has been in office. We need an explanation from the Minister for the Environment about why the salinity monitoring has fallen.

At page 101, under the heading "Altered water regimes", the "Key findings" state -

- Regional groundwater tables across the Wheatbelt are generally rising or remaining steady over the long term.
- Water is being over-used at 25% of managed surface water sites and 9% of managed groundwater sites.
- Dam construction on some major waterways has reduced natural flows by up to 95%.

What is the government doing about these very important issues? The report identifies that the government has been lacking in its approach to this matter. Therefore, we certainly need to hear from the Minister for the Environment on this matter.

At page 109, under the heading "Loss or degradation of wetlands, the "Key findings" state in part -

- Wetland vegetation on the Swan Coastal Plain is being lost or degraded at a rate of about two football ovals per day.
- About 6% of the highest conservation value wetlands on the Swan Coastal Plain suffered vegetation loss or degradation between 1996 and 2004.
- Twenty-six per cent of important wetlands in the Wheatbelt are degrading, with a loss of biodiversity.

Some of these issues are a lot less glamorous than the two to which I referred earlier, but they are just as important. The government needs to take a lot more action to deal with them effectively.

Another important environmental issue from the water resources perspective is the infill sewerage program. That is an important health and environmental program that was put in place by the previous government in about 1994. It was a 10-year plan worth between \$800 million and \$900 million to increase the amount of deep sewerage in the urbanised areas of Western Australia. However, under this government the funding for that program has been reduced substantially. When the previous government was in office in 1998-99, the funding for that program was \$96.3 million. The amount of funding available was generally between \$80 million and \$90 million per annum. However, after Labor came to office in 2001-02, the amount of funding fell to \$51 million. In 2002-03 it fell to \$35 million, in 2003-04 it fell to \$26 million, and in 2004-05 it fell to

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\$33 million. In 2005-06 the budgeted funding is about \$34 million. I think, from memory, the government has allocated only \$30 million for 2006-07. An absolutely disgraceful situation is occurring in Spearwood and other areas as a result of this government deferring the major capital works infill sewerage program. This government has a lot to answer for and needs to start doing so.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Stirling) [3.10 pm]: I support the motion moved by the member for Capel. I will focus particularly on the aspects of inland salinity that have been referred to in this report. Statements have already been made on the impact of salinity. The report is really quite damning. An estimated 75 per cent of Australia has a growing salinity problem, and Western Australia is truly the salinity state of Australia, because about 1.08 million hectares of south west land is salt affected and more than 14 000 hectares are lost to land salinisation each year. As has been mentioned, this represents about 19 football fields a day, and is very substantial. The figures for the salinisation of inland waterways are also of serious concern, particularly those for Western Australia. I want to highlight and acknowledge the efforts of those responsible for supporting the Collie and Denmark river catchments. The level of salinity in those rivers has decreased, which is a move in the right direction. I also acknowledge the work that the various natural resource management groups have done around the state. They face the huge task of getting substantial dollars on the ground in those areas. National Party members have talked about some of the issues they have faced in recent times. They have been able to get some government support, particularly for strengthening governance responsibilities at a regional level. However, the impact of salinity has a significant effect on regional communities. Pressures on essential services are already being felt in regional Western Australia. People are losing confidence in the reliability of those services. They are concerned about the lack of access to education, recreational opportunities and jobs. Confronted with those challenges, people are choosing to leave inland communities and move to some of the coastal areas. The problem of salt encroachment is compounding and has become a major threat to viable agricultural production and vibrant communities.

I want to highlight some of the points that the Western Australian National Party members have put forward in acknowledgment of salinity issues in Western Australia, which we believe should be supported by this government. First, we believe the government should lift the ban on the growing of genetically modified crops in Western Australia for non-food crops. We examined the study on salt-tolerant wheat conducted in Corrigin. We called on the government to lift the ban to enable farmers to grow such wheat in saline areas for the biofuels industry to put into the fuel tanks of the state's cars. That must be a win-win scenario, which we believe the government should seriously consider. It directly addresses the issue of vegetation in salt-affected areas. The member for Merredin and Leader of the National Party has talked on a number of occasions about the plan put forward by Western Australian National Party members called Living Lakes 2030 for an engineering solution to some of these issues in the wheatbelt. There are some very good examples in Perenjori of gains being made not only in salinity issues, but also in supporting community recreation and biodiversity in those waterways. This great initiative is happening; it is working there now. The whole community is supportive of it. We need to expand that thinking and take the program into other regional areas.

I am also concerned that this government is targeting the south west Yarragadee aquifer as a source of water for Perth. We acknowledge that the area has regional needs that must be met. The Department of Water approaches this on the basis that if it needs more water, it will go out and find a source. The south west Yarragadee is a large source of water, so the Department of Water thinks that it will target that. The same thing is happening with the Denmark River, where, as a result of a huge effort over many years, the local community has turned around salinity levels in the water. The Department of Water is looking upon that as a potential source of water for Albany down the track. If an area is out of water, the department's attitude is that it will use an existing source rather than put its energy into finding alternatives. One of our big concerns, particularly with the south west Yarragadee, is the potential impact of salinity and the environmental impact of drawing water out of the south west Yarragadee. From the rhetoric in the national media, people know that National Party members have made the blanket statement that they do not support the proposal to pump water from the south west Yarragadee to Perth. That is a blanket statement, full stop. We do not add a rider about a study being done to make sure that it will be environmentally sound, because we do not accept that a decision on whether the water should be pumped to Perth should rest on a report. People in that area certainly do not want that to happen, and we are making that blanket statement. If we are in a position to make a contribution to government policy on that matter, that will be our position.

Mr J.H.D. Day: What about water going from here to Kalgoorlie?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: We need to do that, but inland desalination is another issue that the National Party has pushed and supported. With the systems we have outlined in Living Lakes 2030, it is possible to have desalination plants in the wheatbelt areas to support the provision of fresh water for those communities.

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I do not have a lot of time in which to talk, but I have highlighted the points that Western Australian National Party members have brought forward and this government could support, particularly when targeting the issues of salinity in inland Western Australia, and the salinity levels in many of the state's waterways. Those issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

DR G.G. JACOBS (Roe) [3.18 pm]: The number of members present on the other side of the house reflects government members' concern for the environment. It is rather concerning that the whole front bench is essentially empty. That being the case, I will talk on the environmental report that refers to a five-star environmental problem. The member for Stirling has just touched on the issue of land salinisation. An estimated 75 per cent of Australia's dryland salinity problems occur in Western Australia. Salinity is affecting an ever-increasing area of land. Shallow-rooted annual crops, pastures and bare soil typically use much less water than native vegetation, which allows water to pass into deeper levels of the soil, which increases water storage at a much faster rate. Over time the continued recharge causes ground water tables to rise, bringing with them salt stored deep in the soil. For this reason it may take several decades for land salinisation to become noticeable on the land surface, following the clearing of native vegetation. People in the past heaped guilt on previous practices, saying that we had over-cleared the land and brought the problem upon ourselves. That is history. As we cannot vacate Western Australia and put into all the rural land its native vegetation, we must face the problem. It was with this in mind that I read the report. I have some very deep concerns about the long-term vision and action to combat salinity.

I have an interest in this, and members have possibly heard me talk about this previously. Natural waterways are becoming salt affected; for example, the Swan-Canning river system and the Blackwood River. Revegetation, although laudable and useful, will not alone solve the salinity problem, as the salt needs to be moved. Well-built drains - the report refers to drains - with revegetated banks, draining into natural watercourses will move salt. I can hear people saying that we intend to dump salt into waterways. Deep drains into a natural waterway will, by way of increased flows, reduce salinity in the long term. Drainage of this type does not dump salt in waterways. Winter flushing, the knowledge of water flows, treating saline water before it is released into rivers as needed - shandyng water, so to speak - damming flows with gates and releasing predetermined amounts of water with predetermined salt concentrations will help promote flow in the Swan and Blackwood systems. Ultimately it will reduce contamination.

There has to be some ticker shown in dealing with this problem. I will give an insight into dealing with the real issue of moving salt. I have spoken to farmers on salt-affected land at Kulin, where I was recently. Trees are dying and I said to the owner, "What's happened to those trees?" He said, "Graham, trees work to a limited degree until they get their tap roots into the saline and then they die. We have to move the salt." Every time we talk about moving salt I can hear members opposite saying, "You are not dumping salt into the Blackwood and you are not dumping salt into our Swan park."

I suggest the problem with the Swan is decreased flow. If flow were improved with the sensible discharge of water, not dumping salt, the Swan would be improved. It would reduce the problems of algal bloom, fertiliser contamination and all the other issues that we have talked about in this place.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham - Minister for the Environment) [3.22 pm]: I thank members of the opposition for moving this motion. I welcome the "State of the Environment report" put together by the Environmental Protection Authority. It is a welcome addition to the information we have at our fingertips. It also points out some of the more significant issues that the state will have to grapple with, not just in coming years or decades but perhaps even centuries. Some of the problems it has outlined are of that level of significance and degree of difficulty to deal with. It is the third of these reports. The first was produced under the Lawrence government and the second under the Court government. I welcome them and I hope they continue.

It is quite interesting to see the opposition move this motion attacking the government's environmental record because my recollection of the past five years or so - I have confirmed it with a whole range of quotations from members, particularly of the Liberal Party - is that they have accused us of being the greenest, most pro-environment government in the state's history. It is a regular statement. They do not say it as a compliment but as an insult. We are regularly insulted by being called that and yet today the opposition moves a motion saying we are not doing enough. It is an interesting phenomenon. Opposition members also say it is all spin. Thirty new national parks were created during the first term of this government. That is unprecedented in this country's history. If members want to look at preserving biodiversity, national parks are a good start. That was one of the top issues raised.

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

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Mr M. McGOWAN: So the member for Darling Range opposed our old-growth forests policy. If members opposite come in here and say we are pro-green and then attack us for it, they lack credibility. As Richard Court used to say regularly, "You cannot have it both ways, my friend." That is the position members opposite find themselves in.

They attacked us regularly on our old-growth forests policy. In fact, the current Leader of the Opposition was the leader of the attack. He regularly described it as environmentalism gone mad. I know he has gone to ground on that statement recently, but we have all the *Hansards* and the newspaper clippings. He attacked us regularly over that. He also attacked businesses that attempted to do something about it. He attacked councils, particularly those that said they would not buy old-growth forest products any more. As Minister for Local Government he threatened them regularly. The other significant environmental issue of the last term of government was the resort at Ningaloo Reef. The opposition said that it would have built it.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Who started it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Who stopped it?

Mr C.J. Barnett: It was the Lawrence government. It was a Labor Party proposal.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Who said it still would have built it? It was the Liberal Party in this state.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Remember the brochure you produced on old-growth forests? They were actually re-growth forests but you didn't know the difference.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Members opposite can run and hide all they like but the public knows the truth.

I could go into a whole range of issues. The defining issue in the lead-up to the last election campaign was the canal. We recently had a report put together - it was undeniable - by Professor Reg Appleyard, an outstanding scientist, who said it was an environmental disaster in the making.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is deniable.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We then had the opposition and its federal colleagues saying we should have nuclear power stations built around Perth suburbs.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Who said that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Dr Dennis Jensen, the member for Tangney; the federal environment minister, Senator Campbell; Hon Wilson Tuckey said the same thing; and Senator Lightfoot. They are all saying we should have nuclear power stations. Members opposite say they did not say they should be in Perth. The Charles Court government said we should have two in Perth. Opposition members went quiet for a while but now that idea has erupted again. We have the potential for nuclear power stations in the metropolitan area. It is quite remarkable that a political party would propose that.

Today I talked about the impact that some activities are having on whales and proposed a way of making the situation better. Members of the opposition actually laughed at that. I find it amazing that they should do that. The member for Moore laughed and said it was ridiculous. We should do something about these problems. That is what being an environmentalist is all about: one does something when one sees there is a problem. Members opposite pooh-poohed our campaign against the cane toads. We are the only state government ever to try to do something about that remarkably deadly pest that is threatening our state. Members opposite laugh when we introduce these positive initiatives and try to address a problem. I take it from their laughter that they do not support our efforts to save the lives of humpback and right whales; they do not support our efforts to preserve native fauna from cane toads.

Let us deal with a couple of issues they raised. The member for Darling Range said that wetlands were a problem. Whenever wetlands are raised, members of the Liberal Party go absolutely mad about the government attempting to address -

Mr J.H.D. Day interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am. Wetlands are mentioned in the report. Members of the Liberal Party go absolutely mad about our proposals to do something about wetlands. Let us deal with some of the issues they raised. They referred to invasive animals and plants and said we were doing nothing. The key to doing something about those problems is having sufficient resources to address the issues - I acknowledge that they are huge issues - of weeds, foxes, cats, feral goats, feral dogs, feral pigs, feral camels; they are there in their millions. We need to have resources to be able to do something about them. In the most recent budget, the government increased the budget for the Department of Conservation and Land Management by 11 per cent. The bulk of those funds are

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going towards the management of feral animals and weeds. This is the biggest funding increase in memory for dealing with those issues. The government is actually -

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does the member want to cut down the forest? The member still wants to cut down old-growth forests. Mr Speaker, we will flush him out on this one. Does he know who stopped logging? Does the member still want to do that?

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member going to tell his electorate? Does he support our policy now? The issue of toads was raised by the member for Capel. He seemed to imply that the government was not doing much about it. The government recently announced a further allocation of \$3.6 million, taking the total state commitment to this issue to over \$6 million. I was recently in Queensland, and the people of Queensland were very excited because the Queensland government had recently allocated only \$1 million to deal with cane toads. We multiplied that by six. Apparently, according to the opposition, that is not enough.

The opposition also raised the issue of greenhouse gases. I am absolutely dumbfounded when I hear a member of the opposition raise the issue of greenhouse gases. The Prime Minister regularly pooh-poohs the issue of greenhouse gas emissions. He is a greenhouse sceptic. The Prime Minister made a speech just a couple of weeks ago in which he said that the recent cold winter put paid to the theory of global warming. We may be able to find a couple of TAFE lecturers around the world who would say that, but we will also find thousands of reputable professors who say the opposite. The Prime Minister and the Liberal Party refuse to be part of any sort of international solution to this issue. The state government supports an international solution, as do our federal colleagues.

We have undertaken a range of initiatives as a state government to deal with the issue at a state level because of the lack of federal action in this sphere. We support the Kyoto Protocol as a means of action. In the absence of commonwealth leadership, we are working nationally with other states in undertaking various measures. We implemented the disaggregation of Western Power, which, as any renewable energy supplier will attest, was a great step forward in allowing renewable energy into the system. We have set a target of six per cent renewable energy on the grid by 2010; we have the renewable energy production subsidy scheme; we have the TravelSmart program; we have the Network city strategy to reduce our reliance upon cars; we are working towards the implementation of the building average sustainability index; we have commissioned a new wind farm to supply power to the desalination plant; we recently announced the construction of a new gas-fired power station; we support biofuels; and as I announced recently, we are putting out proposals - which I think are very good - to put in place a greenhouse gas inventory. In conjunction with other states, the mandatory greenhouse gas inventory will allow industries to work out the level of greenhouse gas emissions they are producing, so that there is a proper reading of what is going on. They are significant achievements, but we intend to keep taking the greenhouse gas issue forward. I regard it as probably the most serious issue the world confronts. We all need to take steps to deal with the issue, and not bury our heads in the sand and deny that it exists. The government is taking those steps and will continue to do so.

The opposition raised a few other issues. Whenever the issue of wetlands is raised by the government, members of the opposition say nothing should be done about it. The issue of salinity was also raised by a couple of members of the opposition. In conjunction with the commonwealth, we are implementing the national action plan for salinity and water quality, which will result in the spending of more than \$316 million on this problem. It is a problem that has developed over more than a century, and it will take centuries rather than decades to deal with. It is something that has caused immense problems for our state. We have put significant funds into it. The Minister for Agriculture and Food has actually worked out a way of getting results on the ground. Despite what members of the opposition say, one thing we will not do is allow acid water, affected by salt via a process involving sulphuric acid - there is a lot of that sort of water in the wheatbelt -

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We will not allow that water to be put into our river systems. That is our position. If the opposition wants to put sulphuric acid-affected water into our river systems, it will not receive our support. The federal environment minister, Senator Campbell, recently said that he would do it anyway at an area known as Yenyening Lakes, to the east of York; he said the state should support it.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If Senator Campbell wants to do that, it is something we will not be part of. We will not be party to the commonwealth government destroying our river systems, and in particular the Swan River

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system. It has a massive catchment and is a great river system. We will work to preserve that river system and not destroy it. We support renewable energy; Senator Campbell opposes it. We will take up all these environmental issues. I remind members of the 11 per cent increase to the CALM budget; the 30 per cent increase to the Department of Environment budget; and the extra \$1 million we added to the \$15 million for the Swan River Trust. The government paid off the Perth Zoo's debt. The Zoo is a marvellous organisation, and we paid off \$17 million of its debt last year. We recently announced massive increases in penalties for those who pollute and the waste levy to deal with the massive waste problems that the state is developing. It took political courage to increase the waste levy, but we are going to do that because we can see that waste is an increasing problem. The Swan River bill should go through Parliament very soon, and we will bring in a new biodiversity bill later this year.

We are doing something about these things. The Labor Party, of all the major political parties, has always been the champion of the environment, and that will not change. Even though the Leader of the Opposition wants to knock over old-growth forests - we have it all in writing - the government will preserve them, and that will be our legacy.

MRS J. HUGHES (Kingsley) [3.38 pm]: One of the key words in this house at this stage is "commitment". This side of the house has always shown a commitment to the environment. It has always put its money where its mouth is. It has always put itself forward on the issue of old-growth forests, and made the end of logging happen; it made a commitment to marine parks, and made it happen; it made a commitment to ongoing funding for the Swan River, and it happened; it made a commitment to increase the national parks and improve their management, and it happened. The government also has a commitment to local and regional parks - all the time, every day. We talk about the environment on a global scale; I do not know how the Liberal Party can hold its head high on the issue of global warming. Some of the announcements that have been made recently were appalling. We all know that global warming affects every aspect of our environment, whether it be temperature, salinity, water resources or rain. All those matters are encompassed in that one phrase "global warming". No member of the opposition has any commitment to the environment. Again, there is commitment from the government side to biofuels, clean energy and wind farms. Shall I go on?

On the local level, Perth itself has some wonderful jewels. Yellagonga Regional Park sits in my electorate and there is an ongoing commitment to it. Just recently \$35 000 was committed for a feasibility study for an environmental centre in the northern corridor, something for which people have fought for more than 12 years. Once again that is a commitment from this government to put its money where its mouth is. Just today a group of people from the community is assessing different sites along the lakes in my electorate for a site for the northern corridor environmental centre.

To be part of a government with this government's environmental record is a pleasure; if it were not, I would not be standing on this side of the house. I could never support such a motion before the house. Before the opposition pulled a stunt like this, it should have put commitment first and talked to us about what was really going on.

MRS C.A. MARTIN (Kimberley) [3.41 pm]: I rise to oppose the motion, of course. I am speaking from the Kimberley perspective, because it is important that these issues be put on the record. This government has actually expanded the conservation estate in the Kimberley, which means that we and our kids have benefited. This government saved our last wild river from the onslaught of the proposed canal project. That project proved to be not at all environmentally sound - funny that! Also, we have put a lot of time and energy into ensuring that we conserve the environment so that we can leave something for our kids. We do things like cleaning up the messes of the past. I have to say that the Ord irrigation scheme is there - fair enough. We knew 50 years ago that we should have had fish stairs, but that was a bit expensive so we left them out. This government will fix that.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Fish ladders.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: Stairs, ladders, it does not matter; it was stuffed up in the first place and we will fix it.

We are also rationalising industry because nobody else would; we will preserve something instead of allowing the onslaught of the attitude of here it is, let us harvest it. That rationalisation is showing up in the fishing industry. We have started to protect fish stock in marine parks. The opposition did not do it. We did it. We have wind farms.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: Here we go! Are wind farms a renewable energy source? Opposition members opposed them. What is the matter with opposition members? Where are their brains?

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Several members interjected.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: Where is tidal power?

Mr P.D. Omodei: Ord hydro.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: The opposition needs a brain. It actually needs some innovation and it needs some vision. This government has them, and for the long term, not just for one term of government. Sustainability works.

Of course we also have to deal with introduced animal and bird species. We have a toadie up in the Kimberley. Where did that come from? Whose responsibility is it?

Several members interjected.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: It is not Western Australia's responsibility; it is a federal responsibility. It crosses borders. The opposition should get that right. However, it should not worry, because Western Australia is dealing with it, as ours is a responsible government. How dare the opposition move this motion! It is ludicrous. It is ridiculous.

We have other introduced species to deal with. Where did the Noogoora burr come from? Again it was a Queensland import. In the time of the previous government, members opposite did not sort out that problem. Where did it come from?

Mr P.D. Omodei: The Ord.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: The Ord - well, yoo-hoo! It nearly stuffed up our wool industry. We are actually dealing with it. We do not sit on our hands. We worry about the environment. When the opposition moves a motion such as this, it insults members on this side of the house, as we take the environment seriously.

MRS D.J. GUISE (Wanneroo - Deputy Speaker) [3.44 pm]: I certainly cannot support this motion.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Come on!

Mrs D.J. GUISE: Come on, guys! I could not within a bull's roar support this motion. The former Liberal government would not have found the Gnangara mound if it had stumbled over it on a dark night!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs J. Hughes): That is right.

Mrs D.J. GUISE: I think there was a little contribution there from the Chair; however, I will move on.

Let me think about what I inherited as member for Wanneroo. I inherited degraded wetlands; no serious thought at all shown to integrated land use and water management; and a diminished water supply, evidenced by the state of those very degraded wetlands, which also threatened industry. People come to me with files that are a mile thick and go back years; therefore, there was plenty of time for members opposite to address those issues when they were in government. What did we have to do? We had to pick up the pieces. We first of all dealt with the diminished water supply by, thankfully, looking outside the square for ways in which to replenish the aquifer in my electorate. Getting serious about recycling water and managed aquifer recharge will help to save the horticulture industry, which is valuable not only to my electorate, but also to the entire state. At Yanchep National Park we had to rewater the caves - the Minister for the Environment will love this - to save the endangered critters that he heard about the other week.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mrs D.J. GUISE: Well done! I thank the minister for the money he is pouring into the Department of Conservation and Land Management to do work in Yanchep National Park. I ask him to keep it coming because we have not finished yet. We have also had to implement a program for eradicating feral animals.

Mr P.D. Omodei: That is just not happening. Go and do your homework!

Mrs D.J. GUISE: I am talking about my patch, so the Leader of the Opposition should leave me with it for a while. I am talking about the lack of interest that he showed in the Gnangara mound in my electorate, which he obviously could not find.

Mr P.D. Omodei: It is really embarrassing to have to listen to this rubbish!

Mrs D.J. GUISE: It is more embarrassing to know what I inherited. I have been kind to you, mate! The former minister should not tempt me or I will go right there.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You should not be referring to a member as "mate".

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Mrs D.J. GUISE: Sorry, member; I am sure *Hansard* will fix that up. We have also commenced metering on the mound so that people who are working the land can access information. That was long overdue. Further investigations are being undertaken with their support so that we can manage the water resource in a proper way.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mrs D.J. GUISE: We have taken further steps to look after the park. Yanchep National Park looks nothing like it did in 2001. The improvements that have been made to that park are amazing, despite it having had a major fire. The local officers are a credit to CALM for the work undertaken and a credit to this government for recognising the need to regenerate a park that had been very much ignored and diminished.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! There is a member on her feet.

Mrs D.J. GUISE: This government therefore inherited a diminished water supply, degraded wetlands and an environment under stress. What was done under the previous government? Nothing. What has been done since? All the things that I have talked about and ongoing work under the state water strategy, which is commendable. Because of those things alone, there is no way I could support this motion. I could go on about the air quality issue. Let me see; how much rail was laid under the former Liberal government? Would somebody remind me? Not even one metre of rail was laid. That is an abysmal record on public transport. The previous government has no record of laying rail; just of building roads for more cars to pollute the air. On that note I will sit down, as another member wants to speak.

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine) [3.50 pm]: The attitude of those on the other side of the house to the environment is interesting. In the past few months, the opposition has given a clear indication that it supports the idea of nuclear energy and nuclear waste being brought into this state. I remind members that as late as September 2005, former Pangea Resources Australia boss Charlie McCombie, who is now with the Association for Regional and International Underground Storage, restated his desire for a nuclear dump site in Australia. I remind members opposite that the attitude of Pangea has not gone away. Pangea's current business plan is based on bringing 76 000 metric tonnes of spent nuclear fuel into this state and reprocessing high level waste over the next 40 years. The Prime Minister has again started to talk about nuclear waste. Is a conspiracy going on somewhere? Do members remember what was happening in Kalgoorlie before the current member for Kalgoorlie was elected to Parliament? I note that the member for Kalgoorlie is talking about taking on other business interests should he not sort out his problems with the Leader of the Opposition. I wonder whether that business interest is about rekindling Pangea's idea of having a base in Kalgoorlie. Is this motion part of a conspiracy by members on the other side of the house to soften us up to the issue of nuclear waste and to pooh-pooh the fantastic efforts made by the Gallop and Carpenter governments for the environment? It is quite clear what is happening right across Australia in the debate on the environment. In the nuclear fuel debate, the Labor Party is being pooh-poohed by the other side of the house because it is firm on making sure that nuclear waste does not come into this state. Quite frankly, this is another little dig at the fact that this government, above all other Australian governments, cares about the environment.

This government is firmly opposed to the sorts of things that would bring 76 000 metric tonnes of nuclear waste into this state on an annual basis. I do not think we should let the idea of Pangea go away. We should start looking at it again to determine the motives of those opposite. I honestly believe that, as with the split in the current Liberal Party, there is a conspiracy lurking about somewhere.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 20 June 2006]
p3930b-3939a

Dr Steve Thomas; Mr John Day; Mr Terry Redman; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Mark McGowan; Mrs Judy Hughes;
Mrs Carol Martin; Ms Dianne Guise; Acting Speaker; Mr Bob Kucera

Ayes (23)

Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan
Mr M.J. Birney
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Dr E. Constable

Mr M.J. Cowper
Mr J.H.D. Day
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Ms K. Hodson-Thomas
Mr J.E. McGrath

Mr P.D. Omodei
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr G. Snook
Mr T.R. Sprigg
Dr S.C. Thomas
Mr M.W. Trenorden

Mr T.K. Waldron
Ms S.E. Walker
Mr G.A. Woodhams
Dr J.M. Woollard
Dr G.G. Jacobs (*Teller*)

Noes (25)

Mr P.W. Andrews
Mr J.J.M. Bowler
Mr A.J. Carpenter
Mr J.B. D'Orazio
Dr J.M. Edwards
Mrs J. Hughes
Mr J.N. Hyde

Mr J.C. Kobelke
Mr R.C. Kucera
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr J.A. McGinty
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.M. McHale
Mr A.D. McRae

Mrs C.A. Martin
Mr M.P. Murray
Mr A.P. O'Gorman
Ms M.M. Quirk
Ms J.A. Radisich
Mr E.S. Ripper
Mrs M.H. Roberts

Mr P.B. Watson
Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr S.R. Hill (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr R.F. Johnson

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan
Mr J.R. Quigley

Question thus negatived.