

*Minister for Environment — Adjournment Debate*

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [5.10 pm]: I find myself quite envious of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT**: She has not only an easy target but also a minister from whom she can get information. Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has worked out how to do it; she stands in this place and she makes —

**Hon Ken Travers**: That's because her minister can't help himself!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford)**: Order, members! If I cannot hear the debate, nor can Hansard. Hon Sally Talbot has the call and nobody else.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT**: I thank Hon Ken Travers for that interjection; he always anticipates the direction that my arguments are heading.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich stands and gives an adjournment debate speech, and the minister simply cannot help himself. The only way we ever find out anything from this government is by interjection. It is government by interjection. Last year was the year of government by thought bubble; this year is the year of government by interjection.

I said that I find myself quite envious because at least Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich has a minister who manages to spend some time in the chamber and does his best to engage with some of the issues. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the minister whom I have the responsibility of shadowing, Hon Donna Faragher. I would have thought that the past few months, when the house has not been sitting, would have been a good time for a minister, particularly a minister with a range of very important portfolio responsibilities and a range of very challenging issues that require the attention of the government, and the Minister for Environment in particular, to go home to quietly reflect on the strategy for the new year. What a curious profession we have that we talk about coming back to start the new year on 2 March; nevertheless, that is the way it goes. However, here we are in this chamber full of energy to start the year and what do we see from the Minister for Environment? We see somebody who is clearly too tired and too depressed to even engage with some of the issues.

I started off, I thought, quite gently yesterday. Members will have noticed that I do not often put questions of which some notice is given, but I did that yesterday because I thought we would ease ourselves in slowly and gently. I asked the minister a question about a historic homestead in the Murchison district. Would members not think that if a question like that came across their desk that—I have checked with some of our ministers —

*Point of Order*

**Hon HELEN MORTON**: I do not know the ruling on this matter, but I am almost certain that it is not appropriate for Hon Sally Talbot to cast a comment about a minister being depressed. That is a clinical situation and unless the member has advice that the minister is depressed, I think she should withdraw that and perhaps use a different label.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT**: I am looking for a minister to come into this chamber with enthusiasm and energy and to engage with the points —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT**: Perhaps I should comment on the point of order. I was listening closely to the comments, and I do not recall having gained the impression that the member was referring to the minister having clinical depression. It seemed to me that it was more about attitude. I am sure that if Hon Sally Talbot thought that was the context of her comments, it would be a mistake and she would apologise.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon SALLY TALBOT**: Thank you, Mr Deputy President. I began yesterday with a question of which some notice had been given about a homestead in the Murchison. As I was saying, I would have thought that it would be fairly standard practice for a minister to go through the answers to questions of which some notice had been given to make sure the responses were adequate. We would expect that to be the case. When I asked my question yesterday, the minister clearly had absolutely —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT**: Order, members! I do not know whether it is a fault of this chamber, but I can hear a conversation over by the door better than the speech by Hon Sally Talbot. When people interject in groups or mumble loudly, I cannot discern anything; I lose the whole context. That is an impossible situation for

Hansard. We are here for a little while. I know that it is an uncomfortable place, but members should just keep the noise down so that we can get through the business of the house.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

**Hon Ken Travers:** You are like a natural endorphin to the minister.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order, Hon Ken Travers!

**Hon Norman Moore:** Throw him out! He continues to ignore your rulings.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** It is okay, Leader of the House; he will not distract me from the points I am making.  
Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** The Minister for Environment clearly had no idea what I was talking about yesterday when she responded to my question. I was raising a very serious issue about the protection of not only the environment in the Murchison district but also some of our pastoral heritage. The minister simply said, “Oh well, I’m sure someone’s looking at it and we’ll make a decision at the end of the year”. I would have thought that when my question came across her desk, she would have said to somebody, “Is there something I need to know about this?” It would not have taken much more than a quick google to find what the issue was. Today, things went from bad to worse. I was not planning to get to my feet tonight, but I have done so after asking the minister today about an assurance she gave the house only a matter of weeks ago. I originally raised in the house the use by councils of the product Chipco Spearhead when spraying the banks of the Swan River. I asked the minister what I thought was a perfectly reasonable question; that is, how could she endorse the use of a product on the banks of the Swan River when, on its label, it says that it is not to be used in a marine environment? Her answer to me over a couple of days was that her advice was that every council was using Chipco Spearhead in accordance with the label instructions and best practice advice. It transpires that that may not be the case. A recent report in a local newspaper stated that several metropolitan councils are in fact removing the signs that warn users of the areas that are being sprayed with Chipco Spearhead. The label on the product clearly says that this substance is harmful if it comes into contact with people’s skin within two weeks of it being sprayed. The newspaper presented evidence that those signs were being removed by these local councils—it named the councils—immediately after the spraying. There is clearly a problem here. What was the minister’s response to me? Did she stand and say that she had looked at this issue and that the journalist had got it wrong? Did she say that she had put in place an immediate audit of the use of this substance? No, she stood and said that if I had evidence that this is in fact happening, I needed to report it to the commonwealth government and another department. That is what she says. She says, “These are the people to go to if you’ve got concerns. Don’t come to me.” I do not know what uses up her time, but clearly she is not reading the stuff that comes across her desk and she is not listening to the advice given to her. I know she does not ask for advice because everybody in this state tells me that she never asks for advice. She is not reading and she is not listening; what are we supposed to deduce from her behaviour in this place and outside in the wider electorate?

I remind Hon Donna Faragher that she is, in fact, the minister, and that she is in charge of these things. Of course I will make my own inquiries and of course I will do the follow-up; I owe that to the people of Western Australia. It is my job to do that. But we have a minister who does the metaphorical equivalent of standing up and saying, “Talk to the hand because the face is not listening.”

I want to be of assistance to the minister; she has clearly not done her new year’s resolution list, so I just want to run through a quick list of things that I, and everybody on this side, will be taking up to her over the coming year. Seeing as we got on to the subject of the spraying of toxic weedkiller on the banks of the River Swan, we will start with the Swan River and the issue of dolphin deaths at the end of last year. What more emotive issue could there be than dead dolphins in the Swan River and Bunbury waters? What is happening there? Report after report after report, referral, flick it here, flick it there—do we get any answers from the minister? We get no more answers from the minister about dolphin deaths than we get about the question of dredging in Fremantle.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford):** Order, members! We are in danger of slipping into rabble again.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I have called for the dredging to be postponed until we have some clear answers to the questions about what the dredging is doing. Will the minister do that? No.

What happens when we have elevated lead levels at the port of Fremantle? The minister appears on television saying it is not a problem, that it did not come from there and it does not belong to Magellan.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** We have lead levels way above not just the baseline measurements, but the accepted level in an industrial working area. All the minister says is, “Talk to the hand because the face isn’t listening.”

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order, members!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** What about the pollution from landfill sites?

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Members elected me to do the job of keeping the decorum of the house. I can keep on getting up for only so long; I will just stand up and leave the chair. The minister is in the house and I do not mind a little interjection from people around the chamber, but not all at once. Do not do it! Hon Sally Talbot has the call.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I have only got a very short time left and I probably will not have time to get through this long list.

In relation to the Swan River, the minister’s greatest failure so far is that while she is pumping literally millions and millions of dollars into the Swan nutrient stripping program, she has failed to act to stop the nutrients going into the river in the first place. What sort of rocket science is that? Schoolchildren all over this state know that the single most important thing that could be done for the Swan River is to stop the nutrients entering it. Instead of that, the minister is pouring our money into the Swan River to strip the nutrients out once they are there.

I put the minister on notice that I have this list in front of me; if she does not have hers, then she is simply not doing her job, which is what she shows us day after day after day in this place.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 5.23 pm*

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