

PARKS FOR PEOPLE PROGRAM — NATIONAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

406. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Environment:

Can the minister please update the house on how the Liberal–National government is improving access to the state’s national parks and conservation areas with a significant funding commitment in this year’s budget for the implementation of the Parks for People program?

Mr A.P. JACOB replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question. Just before I answer it, I acknowledge the year 11 students from Penrhos College in the electorate of the member for South Perth who are in the gallery today.

The Parks for People program, which is being jointly funded with royalties for regions, is going to see \$21 million invested over the next four years in camping, caravanning and visitor infrastructure in Western Australia’s national parks and conservation areas. Parks and forests visitation in this state has increased by around 55 per cent over the past decade, and forward projections have numbers running at around an 80 per cent increase over the next 10 years. So, investing now in affordable and accessible holidaying and visitation options for Western Australian families, I think, is a very important investment for this government to make. This is not only about holidaying options for Western Australian families—important though that is—but also very much about the strong environmental outcome this state gets from investing in these sorts of facilities in our natural areas. We will be opening up new areas of national park and new areas of conservation in the state, and we will be better protecting those areas by providing better facilities through which visitors will be able to engage more responsibly with our natural areas, and also facilities to encourage accommodation and indeed passive surveillance, which also leads to a very good outcome for our natural areas and areas that may be vandalised or have antisocial behaviour occurring in them as they currently stand.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Any more rangers to look out for all those people in the national parks?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am only just starting to run through what we have to announce, member.

Works will include new lookouts, new boardwalks, walk trails and camping facilities such as camp kitchens, picnic tables and other such facilities. The focus of the program initially will be in the south west and midwest, and also in our national parks in the Perth hills. Work will continue in such national parks as Leeuwin–Naturaliste; importantly, I mention Lane Poole and Logue Brook, which are very accessible, large camping areas nice and adjacent to the metropolitan area. They are already very popular weekend—or even sometimes longer—destinations. This \$21 million over the next four years builds on the more than \$60 million that has already been allocated by this state government to infrastructure in this state’s marine and national parks. This is another example of how this state government continues to invest in the future by building long-term assets that will be there for the enjoyment of future generations.