

## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

### *Statement*

**HON DIANE EVERS (South West)** [5.29 pm]: Over the past week, I have talked quite a bit about water. I have talked about forests in the past. I have been thinking about the natural resources of our state and how we manage them, account for them, share them and reap the benefits from them. Today, I heard the word “privatisation” and I thought, “You’re right; that fits in there, too”, because we can do many different things with the natural resources of this state. It starts from complete government ownership; the government can dish them out and use them as it chooses. But, of course, we have tried to move away from that and encourage private business to come in and use our resources to help develop industry and jobs and to bring in export income for the state. There is full government ownership, licensed ownership and leased ownership so that people have a stronger connection to the resource, and then we get to the point of state agreements and things like that. We can use a range of options.

I turn to forests. If we look at them simply and how we have managed them in the past, when people came here and they were building and developing the place, our forests were pretty much fair game and people could take what they wanted and make the best of it. Somewhere along the line, we realised, “Wait a second. We can’t cut the forests too quickly. We’ve lost a lot and we need to slow down a bit and reserve some of the forests for a longer period.” That is working. I still think that there is more to be done because we are not replacing the forests anywhere nearly as quickly as we need to with plantations and other options.

Most of the time this week during my members’ statements, I talked about water and having a water act that pretty much operates on a first come, first served basis. It has always been the case that, having met all the conditions for a licence, whoever asks for the water first gets it and they can do with it what they like. If people wanted to, they could choose to not take the water or they could put it into big evaporation ponds and get rid of it. It is people’s right to it. I then thought further back over the time that I have been here and about the lobster industry. At first we pretty much said, “Take what you can catch”, but then we realised that we were going through the lobster stock too quickly so the government put in place licences and quotas to limit the catch. Licences were originally fixed in 1967 or so, and those licences remain. It was not until a couple of years ago that a change was introduced into this house whereby the state would take control of the lobster resource. There was uproar from those within the industry because, of course, they did not want the state to get revenue from the lobster industry. That suggestion backfired. It has been pushed aside and we have let it go.

Sandalwood is another one. Sandalwood is similar in that it is on pastoral land and in areas where there are not a lot of people, so it is almost fair game. We cannot do that because it is disappearing quickly. A side point is that we want to manage sandalwood to keep the price up, which is what happens in the lobster industry. If we take it all away and sell it off now, not only will the price drop, but also we will not have the resource to continue to log, so there has to be some sort of sustainable management. My issue with that is that, unlike the lobster industry, which is in private hands for the most part and has a quota system, the sandalwood industry is pretty much in public hands. The Forest Products Commission has the right to take 90 per cent of what is on crown land even though there is a lot of native title ownership of that crown land. For some reason, Aboriginal companies were allowed to take 10 per cent. I believe that a paper has been released suggesting that it be increased to 20 per cent. Why are Aboriginal companies and Aboriginal people restricted from harvesting the sandalwood that is on their land? It is another step in how we manage the resource of sandalwood.

Sand mines are appearing up and down the coast. For one reason or another, people from around the world want our sand. It might be for the rare metals that are in it or it could just be that our sand is particularly good for making concrete. People are coming here and wanting a lease to extract sand. An industry is developing, but it is an industry of digging it up, putting it on a ship and selling it overseas. It is not really doing much for us. I am just raising these issues because I think we need to plan a more holistic way of managing these resources.

The next thing is limestone, which I am terribly concerned about. Yes, in the south west, limestone is crushed and put on farmland and there is a need for it. We have a lot of it, and it can be dug up from many different places. There is a pit I have been fighting at Nullaki, which is a peninsula down by Albany. It was originally sold off as a conservation area. It was sold in large lots for people to live there. I believe a number of wealthy Americans and a few wealthy Australians went there, took their hundred-hectare lots, cleared the space they wanted for their home and now they have beautiful views. The owner who sold off most of these is now trying to develop a lime pit in this high-conservation area. Unfortunately, after the City of Albany refused it twice, it went to the State Administrative Tribunal and it agreed to it. The people there have been complaining and challenging and appealing this in whatever way they can. It has gone to the Environmental Protection Authority and it said that it assessed that and it was okay. The decision was appealed, but the EPA still said it was okay. It is just that it is not okay.

**Hon Robin Scott:** In your eyes it is not okay. If the EPA approved it, they must have done some work on it.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** Yes, on the environmental aspects, but what about the people who live there and near there along those roads? Those people built there and they have a right to peaceful enjoyment of their area. They are living next to a conservation area. The same thing is happening in Binningup, where within 500 metres of someone's home another lime pit is going in. The council said no, and now the case is being sent to the State Administrative Tribunal. I think we need a larger perspective of how we do this rather than just letting it go until we see it causing a problem in the future. Plan ahead. I know we have this in our planning regulations, but the State Administrative Tribunal is following the guidelines as well. There seems to be a breakdown, because this is happening more and more. As we were just saying in debate on the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill, this is coming up more and more. We need to look at it more holistically. We need to have a wider perspective of how we are doing this and what we are doing. Rather than just having things first-come, first-serve, with people going in and being able to take what they want, we should have some perspective about where we are going, how we are going to do this and who should get control of the assets of the state. We should be doing that rather than just giving them away to the first person who asks. This continues with iron ore, bauxite, gas and even with gold, diamonds and so forth. I am not saying that we should have none of these things. I have a phone that has lithium and all sorts of different metals in it. Yes, I understand batteries. I just do not feel that there is a planning perspective of where we want this to happen, what the environmental damage is, how to manage the resource and what a fair and unreasonable way to do it is. It is a resource of the state. I understand that the government is there to manage this. I find it really difficult when communities around the state have these developments happening near them, but they are trying to stand up, speak out and say that they are not happy with this without having the resources of the large corporations to bring in legal teams and consultants. There is very little area for them to go to.

That is why the Environmental Protection Act is so important. Changing it, as was suggested in the last amendment bill, is a nonsense. We are just making it easier to rape and pillage the state for the benefit of those corporates, investors and people who want to make a bit of money, take it and leave, leaving the community to deal with the mess and leaving local governments to try to support the community and deal with the mess. A lot more planning could go into this. A lot more could be done to do that so we are planning for our future and not just letting it run away one step at a time.