

NINGALOO REEF - WORLD HERITAGE LISTING

38. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for the Environment:

Can the minister inform the house of the latest development towards gaining World Heritage listing for Ningaloo Reef?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. As part of my answer, I acknowledge the efforts of my predecessor, the member for Maylands, who did a wonderful job as Minister for the Environment for this state. She will go down in the history books for the amount of work she undertook and her achievements.

I was very pleased to go to Exmouth a few weeks ago to release the indicative boundaries.

Ms S.E. Walker: Did you look at the water at Coral Bay?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Nedlands raises the issue of the water at Exmouth reef. She raised it in the Parliament once before and complained to the former minister about the fact that the coral was spawning and therefore affecting the view of people swimming in the water. She wanted to know what the minister would do about it. That was the level of environmental knowledge of that member.

Ms S.E. Walker: Very poor credentials.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I now appreciate sitting where I sat previously. Member for Girrawheen, can we swap places, please?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I know that everyone wants to talk about my electorate, but we must allow the minister to answer the question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I went to Exmouth a few weeks ago and I released the indicative boundaries and a report examining the issue of World Heritage listing of Ningaloo Reef. I was very pleased to do so, because I believe that listing such a magnificent part of this state, Australia and the world would be a great thing to do. We are very keen to proceed with this. We really want to list that 660 000 hectares of that very important part of the state. One would think that that would receive overwhelming universal support in politics. However, in the haste by the shadow Minister for the Environment, the member for Capel, to put out as many press releases as he could to satisfy the leader's demand for more press releases - he has put out 10 press releases in the past month, which is double that of the Leader of the Opposition, whose number of press releases is equal to that of the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale - he put out a press release in which he said -

"I have researched the apparent benefits of passing over control of our natural heritage to the United Nations and there appears to be little in it for Western Australia," Dr Thomas said.

"There is no financial reward for us in listing a site and no on-the-ground assistance in managing it.

"Yet Environment Minister Mr McGowan seems hell bent on handing over control."

The Liberal Party's position is that it does not support World Heritage areas. Is that correct, Leader of the Opposition? Is that the Leader of the Opposition's position - he does not support World Heritage areas?

Dr S.C. Thomas interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that the Leader of the Opposition's position?

Dr S.C. Thomas interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Capel was not asked the question. I call him to order for the first time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Capel put out that press release and attacked the World Heritage listing. However, I need to remind the member of a bit of history. When the Court government was in office, Hon Cheryl Edwardes and Hon Norman Moore nominated Purnululu National Park - the Bungle Bungle - for World Heritage listing. In fact, they supported it very strongly - I have the *Hansard* with me. When it was brought to the attention of the federal government, which, to its credit, put it on the World Heritage List, the federal Liberal Minister for the Environment and Heritage in 2003, Dr Kemp, said -

... World Heritage listing is so prestigious in Australia and overseas that it attracts widespread interest from tourists and provides a financial boost to the region.

"The World Heritage listing process is detailed, demanding and exhaustive. It ensures that only the very best examples of the world's heritage make it onto the world's premier heritage list," ...

When the Liberal Party was in office, it supported World Heritage listing. Now that it is trying to be populist to satisfy the demands of the leader for more press releases, it opposes it.