

DOLPHIN DEATHS — BUNBURY

1160. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Environment:

- (1) Why did the minister fail to alert the public as soon as she found out about the eight dolphin deaths in Bunbury?
- (2) Why has the minister failed to set up an urgent inquiry to find out what is killing the dolphins?
- (3) How many more dolphins do we have to lose before the minister will act?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank the member for her question.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I actually do appreciate that question, as I want to get a few little facts out in this place because Hon Sally Talbot has been peddling some views that I have somehow known about these deaths for a long time. That is absolutely incorrect. The answer is —

- (1)-(3) The reality is that Murdoch University researchers have been doing work for the past couple of years, I am advised. They were finalising some data late yesterday. As soon as I received some preliminary information, I asked for an urgent briefing to be held to provide me and the Minister for Water with advice. That occurred at 8.00 am today.

Several members interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I understand also that Hon Sally Talbot had a briefing right after that—okay? Therefore, at 8.00 am today I was provided with a very detailed briefing by the researchers and departmental officials, and Minister Jacobs was also there from the water perspective.

Several members interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Hon Sally Talbot would also know that, at that time, the researchers had advised me that they were finalising the information with the other partners involved in the research. Without a shadow of a doubt that information was to be released publicly, and it was. As soon as they finalised their report, it was released.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich might think this is funny. Hon Sally Talbot might think it is funny. The way Hon Sally Talbot is carrying on is an absolute disgrace!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Let the minister complete her answer.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The fact is —

Hon Norman Moore interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the House will come to order!

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The fact is that I, as the Minister for Environment, am absolutely committed to finding out why these deaths have occurred.

Hon Sally Talbot interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Sally Talbot should listen to the answer; she has asked the question.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Thank you, Mr President. The fact is, as I said on Tuesday during the urgency motion—although Hon Sally Talbot would like me to be an irresponsible minister and just say, “I actually think it is because of this”—I have to find out the information from the experts. The reality is, as much as I would like to know and everybody else in Western Australia would like to know, the researchers do not have an exact cause of death. The work is being done through the Swan River Trust by the relevant departments and universities—Murdoch University and Curtin University of Technology. Today I was provided with a briefing with regard to the work that has been done in Bunbury. The researchers are also doing further tests that will go interstate, to Melbourne. We would like to think that we will have some advice back from Melbourne within about six or so weeks with regard to potential contaminants. Hon Sally Talbot received the same briefing that I did. The fact is that we are doing everything possible to find out why the deaths have occurred. As I said, Hon Sally Talbot might think she is an expert. I know she thinks she is an expert on absolutely everything, but the reality is that she is not an expert, nor am I. That is why I am listening to the people who are the actual experts in this field;

experts who are also, I might say, discussing this very issue with national and international experts so that, hopefully, we can find out the reason for these deaths.