

FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK — WALK TRAIL

**Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Environment:**

- (1) Has the minister received advice from leading international environmental experts about the risks involved in putting a walk trail through Fitzgerald River National Park?
- (2) Is the minister aware that this advice says that the resulting spread of dieback will be an environmental disaster because it will destroy a biodiversity hot spot that is one of the few areas of the state that is still free from dieback?
- (3) Does the minister accept that advice?
- (4) If yes to (3), what action is the minister taking to halt the plans of the walk trail?
- (5) If no to (3), why not?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:**

- (1)–(2) Yes.
- (3)–(5) The state government recognises the outstanding flora values of Fitzgerald River National Park and the importance of preventing phytophthora dieback introduction. A coastal walk trail from Bremer Bay to Hopetoun already exists in the national park. It is currently unmarked and has a number of converging and diverging paths.

The park improvement project, which includes the proposed construction of a world-class coastal walk trail between Hamersley Inlet and Point Ann, will improve the existing walk trail and direct walkers along one defined pathway; help control unauthorised access through the wilderness area of the park; apply strict controls for dieback hygiene in terms of construction, maintenance and emergency purposes; and ensure that the trail is kept as close to the coast as possible and low in the catchment to minimise the area at potential risk from disease introduction. The Department of Environment and Conservation has implemented a number of risk management strategies associated with the park improvement project. These include an overall phytophthora dieback management plan for the project, including the coastal walk trail; detailed environmental management plans, including phytophthora dieback management for each construction stage of the project; and, the introduction of an environmental code of conduct known as the “green card accreditation process” for all DEC and Main Roads WA staff, as well as contractors involved in the project. It is also intended that emergency services and other volunteers who may need to access the path will be required to earn a green card.

Additionally, DEC is progressing a phytophthora dieback risk assessment along the proposed walk trail alignment to determine specific design and management responses required to minimise the risk of disease introduction, and is working in partnership with the South Coast Natural Resource Management group to undertake a dieback risk assessment for areas surrounding the national park. This work will culminate in an overarching phytophthora dieback management plan for Fitzgerald River National Park. I have also asked DEC to liaise with concerned scientists on the issues they have raised

I am confident that, with these measures in place, DEC will develop a world-class walk trail that will enable public appreciation and enjoyment of the area while minimising the potential for any risk associated with the introduction of dieback. In addition, the state government has allocated \$1.61 million for dieback eradication in Fitzgerald River National Park as part of the state natural resource management funding in 2009.