

TOURISM, MANAGEMENT OF CORAL BAY

958. Mr O'GORMAN to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:

Given yesterday's misleading media release by the opposition spokesperson for tourism on the management of Coral Bay, will the minister outline what work is being undertaken?

Dr EDWARDS replied:

I thank the member for the question. I was interested to read the statement by the shadow Minister for Tourism yesterday. One can say that a few facts were peppered among her comments. It is a great work of fiction. She should take up a new career. Is she the emerging Jeffrey Archer of the backbench, or should she throw in a bit of romance or horror and become the Barbara Cartland or the Stephen King? What horror. Whatever she is, she has a talent. I will refer to some of the inaccuracies in her media release.

Ms Sue Walker interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: The member for Nedlands should listen to my response and get her facts straight before she puts out media releases. I will address the point she made that I have never visited Coral Bay. I had a very good visit to Coral Bay three months after the last election. I went into the bay itself and visited a number of areas and looked at sites for proposed boat ramps. I met with people who live there and hosted a community luncheon. I had a very full visit and heard about the issues there. Perhaps as did the member, I asked where the sewage treatment was and saw both the present site and the proposed site.

One of the member for Nedlands' other comments was that we should increase the number of rangers at Coral Bay. When this Government took office, one part-time ranger worked at Coral Bay. I am very proud to say that since then the Government has increased that capacity by three. Coral Bay now has a full-time and a part-time ranger. We are taking that issue seriously and have increased the coverage.

I will address the issue of inaction. This Government has established the Coral Bay reference group. People representing charter boat operators, recreation and commercial fishers and government departments are working together to develop a strategy for Coral Bay. In addition, in the past year - after this Government was elected - the Department of Conservation and Land Management commissioned an environmental consultant to undertake a concept mooring plan for the area. It has already established a mooring control area in the sanctuary zone and we have made sure that the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority also has been involved. As part of this strategy, recreational vessel users will be required to retrieve their vessels on an as-used basis and commercial and tourism operators will have to register for a mooring. That is part of the concept mooring plan that the consultant is working on.

I refer now to the issue of ranger power. The member made a very helpful comment that we should introduce regulations that give national park rangers and other rangers more power. When I met with the national park rangers last year, they suggested that I do that. I therefore had the regulations drawn up and I have signed them off. They have been to the Executive Council and will be introduced shortly.

I rest my case, and I suggest that the member does not give up her day job!