

CANNING AND SWAN RIVER SYSTEMS

1089. Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO to the Minister for the Environment:

Can the minister outline any recent initiatives to improve the Canning and Swan River systems?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:

I thank the member for his question. I had the great pleasure on the weekend to launch the Great Gardens initiative. It is appropriate that the member asked this question as he was formerly the mayor of the local government that designated itself the "Garden City". In response to the algal bloom earlier this year, it was recognised that the run-off from our gardens played quite a large role in that nutrient build-up. As part of our program to help the river and to prevent nutrients -

Ms S.E. Walker: You're really struggling with the portfolio.

Several members interjected.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: I repeat what I said earlier: there is nothing better than educating a member opposite. It was surprising to learn that the urban contribution was quite significant in the recent algal bloom. That is fairly unusual. That was one reason for taking this initiative. I had great delight on Sunday in launching the Great Gardens initiative, which is a fine example of applying sustainability in the suburbs.

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Nedlands to order for the second time.

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: At least the federal member for Curtin is interested in this question. She attended the launch and was very enthusiastic about the program. Her attitude can be compared with that of the member for Nedlands.

This is an excellent example of sustainability in the suburbs. The program involves a set of workshops. People can attend 17 centres free of charge, and learn about gardening and how to plant things in the garden to attract birds and wildlife and to make the garden a much better place. In addition, people can learn about native plants, what grows best in their areas and what can be put in the gardens to use less nutrients and water. This program has the support, and is run with the assistance, of Nursery and Garden Industry Western Australia and the Water Corporation. The focus is very much on cutting nutrients and water use. This is true sustainability in the suburbs. It has excellent social outcomes. Local governments are allowing their venues to be used so that keen gardeners can get together and obtain new information and free plants. It is a great opportunity for a sector of the industry to use plants that are environmentally friendly. The industry is behind the initiative. At the end of day, this program will make a better environment; that is, people will use less water and nutrients and will have more birds in their gardens.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Warren-Blackwood for the second time.