

NINGALOO REEF - WORLD HERITAGE LISTING

365. Mrs D.J. GUISE to the Minister for the Environment:

Can the minister please advise the house why Ningaloo Reef has not yet been put forward for inclusion on the prestigious World Heritage List register?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for Wanneroo for her question. It is indeed very sad that the listing of the iconic Ningaloo Reef to the north of our state is now hanging in the balance because of the lack of action and, indeed, response by the federal environment minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and, of course, the Prime Minister.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Despite me writing to them earlier this year, and also personally speaking with the federal environment minister in June when we had our ministerial meeting in Queensland, there has been no response about the Howard government's intentions. However, we have had a very positive and pleasing response from the federal Labor opposition leader, Kevin Rudd. Mr Rudd clearly understands that the iconic and important conservation and environmental features, landscape and marine life of Ningaloo Reef are absolutely critical, and that Ningaloo Reef is held in the highest regard by Western Australians and is recognised as very worthy of World Heritage listing. Therefore, I am very pleased that Mr Rudd has committed a federal Labor government to proceeding with the listing of Ningaloo Reef, if a Rudd government is elected nationally later this year. In fact, Mr Rudd has said that he will take this important issue to the appropriate authorities to have it listed for consideration before the February 2008 deadline.

It is very sad that the federal environment minister has refused to respond and to recognise this unique part of Western Australia, which we are all very proud of. It is a very sad indictment on the federal Howard government that once again, in terms of the environment, it does not understand the importance of this area. All the Howard government is interested in here in Western Australia is mining royalties, Australian workplace agreements, genetically modified crops, and the mining and exploitation of uranium. That is all it seems to be interested in.

If a Rudd Labor government is elected at the next federal election, it is a Labor government that will ensure that Ningaloo Reef is listed and recognised for its unique qualities. Only under a Rudd government will it have World Heritage listing. For that reason, those many thousands of Western Australians who understand the importance of this issue will support a Rudd Labor government and its intention to nominate the Ningaloo Reef area for World Heritage listing.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Murray, the member for Cottesloe, the member for Capel and the member for Roe.