

STATE BUDGET - SWAN RIVER TRUST

232. Dr S.C. THOMAS to the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the 2006-07 budget papers for the Swan River Trust and the capital contribution commitment to saving the Swan River, which was an additional \$1 million in 2006-07 and 2007-08.

- (1) What was this money intended to achieve?
- (2) Why was only \$108 000 of the \$1 million spent in 2006-07?
- (3) Why is only \$304 000 in the budget for 2007-08, nearly half of it going to repay debt, and only \$90 000 for 2008-09, with the rest of the promised money shelved?
- (4) Why has the minister short-changed the Swan River environment by \$1.5 million?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the opposition spokesperson for the environment for his questions. I look forward to answering those questions and many more next week during estimates. The member would know that that sort of question -

Ms S.E. Walker interjected.

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

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That in-depth questioning on line items is exactly why we have an estimates process. I am very happy to highlight this government's commitment to the iconic Swan and Canning river system. That system is a very important environmental asset to the people of Western Australia and has great spiritual significance to the indigenous people of Western Australia as well. I am very happy to highlight a number of the government's initiatives of the past five years. I say to the member that over the past five years we have seen investment by this government -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Cottesloe to order for the third time and the member for Hillarys to order.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We have seen investment by this government to ensure that the health and wellbeing of the Swan and Canning river system is of the utmost priority. It is interesting to compare the spending by this government over the past six years to the performance of the Court government during its eight years in power. The Healthy Rivers Action Plan, for example, is a five-year \$40 million plan for the Swan and Canning Rivers. It involves a range of measures aimed at ensuring that we protect this iconic structure in Western Australia. A whole range of programs are in place. I am looking forward to estimates. I certainly look forward to being quizzed by the Leader of the Opposition on the programs because we will find that he will be embarrassed by what is being spent and will be spent in the future compared to what was spent when his party was in government.

We need to make sure that we highlight to the wider community that it also has a role to play in the health and wellbeing of the Swan and Canning Rivers. That is one of the reasons we are looking at ensuring that, for example, highly soluble phosphorous is phased out. Highly soluble phosphorous is one of the key impactors on the health and wellbeing of the river. We are moving forward to ensure that it is phased out. We also know that the community, government and organisations that care about the rivers will play an important role in its future health and wellbeing.

[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: I do not know whether that is an indication that members do not want question time to continue. It is clearly out of order.