

SWAN AND CANNING RIVERS — ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Motion

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett government's failure to protect the environmental health of the Swan and Canning Rivers, and for abolishing the Swan River Trust.

I rise to speak to this motion in recognition that for Western Australians the river system in what was once called the Swan River Colony and the Swan River Settlement is critical to our identity. As George Seddon said, our sense of place comes from our appreciation of the Swan and Canning river system. The river system is a reflection on how well our society is performing. After all, we all live in a catchment, and the activities that go on in that catchment are reflected in the health of the Swan and Canning river system. In the activities that we all enjoy around the river—whether it be yachting, recreational walking, jogging, cycling or perhaps just as freeway commuters—we get to appreciate the beauty of the river and we get the benefit of its good health. But there is a real concern and there is scientific evidence to support the case that the river is in serious trouble. That has been recognised for many years. It has been realised that we have to do something about it. We need to have in place institutions that are capable of bringing the community together, such as community activists who go out there and help regenerate riparian zones and riverbanks and people who are involved in planting trees and shrubs further out in the catchment. We want to support them in their endeavours, as we also want to help the local government organisations that are involved. We also want to support the state government agencies that play such a key role in this whole matter of managing the health of the Swan and Canning river system.

When this government came to power, it felt that the fertiliser action plan was something we could do without. This government was prepared to abandon a program that was set in place by the then environment minister and now Leader of the Opposition for the phase-out of water-soluble fertilisers. That phase-out program was continued by his successor, the member for Mandurah, and would have made such a difference to the long-term health of the catchment of the Swan and Canning river system. It would have reduced the amount of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous flowing into the rivers. However, this government saw fit to get rid of that plan. We could say that is history, but I think we will have to revisit that issue in time.

Just a matter of weeks ago we heard that the government wants to do away with one of the key institutions that has been in place for a number of years and that was designed to protect, manage and regulate the Swan and Canning river system and to educate people about it. We heard that the environment minister has decided to move the Swan River Trust into the Department of Parks and Wildlife. That to my mind is an extremely dangerous move. Straight away it makes me think that there is a downgrading of the importance of the Swan River Trust and the institutional arrangements around the good management of the catchment. But also the Department of Parks and Wildlife has been created; an organisation that is in its early stages. I recognise that the Department of Environment and Conservation was split and that led to the creation of the Department of Environment Regulation and the Department of Parks and Wildlife. When we look at the goals and objectives of this new agency, the Department of Parks and Wildlife, we have to ask ourselves whether this is really the place to put a catchment management organisation.

I will return to this point, but before I do I want to turn to a journal that is put out by the Swan River Trust. I do not know what the status of *RiverView* will be in future and perhaps the Minister for Environment will enlighten us on this in a few hours. *RiverView* is an excellent magazine. Two editions have come out but there is no mention in them of the demise of the Swan River Trust. I want to turn to an article in the first issue, which is an interview with Mick Poole, the chairman of the Swan River Trust. I will quote briefly from the article in which a question is put to Dr Poole that reads —

The Trust is a Statutory Authority. What distinguishes it from other government agency organisations?

Dr Poole's response reads —

We have the unique opportunity to pull together the many threads of local councils, state government agencies, industry and the community to help manage the Swan Canning Riverpark and its associated lands. It's challenging to get everybody singing from the same hymn book but that's life and I think our model is very effective to help maximise our current resources.

The Trust is a relatively small agency of about 60 people that is very productive and has built a strong science based knowledge of the river. It contains a lot of specialist staff who are very passionate about improving the rivers and I think that focus infuses into our partnerships.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2013]

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The phrase “focus infuses into our partnerships” is exactly what this issue is about. We have a focused agency, the Swan River Trust, that knows how to manage the many difficulties that our Swan and Canning river system faces, yet the minister is saying, “We’ll just move those 60 or so people into the Department of Parks and Wildlife and hope that there’ll be the same continued level of focus.”

I mentioned 60 people and just in passing I want to touch on that because when I read the budget papers I actually saw 58 staff; so the chairman was close in saying there were about 60 staff. However, the minister in other communications has referred to 45 staff in the Swan River Trust going to the Department of Parks and Wildlife. I will come back to that detail.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife’s strategic goals spelt out in a goals and objectives document are fantastic; they are exactly what we would expect of a parks and wildlife agency, but it is very different from an agency tasked with managing a riverpark, and this is where the problems come from. The minister—his advisers are perhaps guilty of this—and the people who drafted the Liberal Party election policy documents do not understand the difference between the conservation estate and the management of national parks, nature reserves, conservation parks and section 5(1)(g) reserves under the Conservation and Land Management Act. Those recognised types of conservation estates have a different set of management needs. They have a certain expertise requirement that exists in DPaW, but that is separate and quite different from the expertise required for riverpark management. The goals of DPaW are to look after parks. By that, I refer to establishing and managing the state system of national parks, marine parks, state forests and other terrestrial and marine reserves; looking after wildlife; dealing with fire; and looking after sustainable use. I will go into that. That part of the document refers to managing access to the lands and water under the agency’s care, and to the state’s biodiversity for sustainable uses, including tourism and wood production. Further on in this overarching document that guides the work of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, we can go into the detail and perhaps the best fit would be around this issue of sustainable use. Could the role of the Swan River Trust be implanted into that agency direction of sustainable use? However, when I look at the sorts of things that are listed under “sustainable use” they include completing the forest management plan, working with Tourism WA and nature banks to provide tourism accommodation, working with the tourism industry to promote domestic tourism opportunities, and reviewing the department’s processes for input into the Environmental Protection Authority, the WA Planning Commission and other environmental planning assessments. It is not the fundamental issue of catchment management that is at stake here; it is quite different. That is where this whole thing comes unstuck; the minister, his advisers and the Barnett government have not understood that a totally different set of skills is required to manage a catchment as opposed to a national park. I will give the minister some examples on how different those skills are. DPaW has a good neighbour policy with national parks. It is not too hard to work with property owners and landholders who are adjacent to a national park. We can have a national park with a mine in the middle of it. The Marandoo mine is located in Karijini National Park. That does not necessarily compromise what is going on in the national park. It is different, of course, from a wilderness perspective; however, there is some potential for coexistence. When it comes to management of a catchment, where one of the major problems is the sorts of pollutants that are likely to get into the Swan and Canning river system, there is the potential for damage from nitrogen and phosphorous from diffuse and point sources—from so many different landholders; in fact, the whole of the Perth population who live in the Swan–Canning catchment. That is a different task from the one DPaW has in working with those private landholders who adjoin nature reserves or national parks. The government has misunderstood that.

The health of the river reflects how well we manage our society. It is a sad reflection on our society, if we are turning creek lines into drains. It is a sign of the unsustainability of our society. A body like the Swan River Trust can turn that around. It has the capacity to work with companies and businesses, and private land holders—property owners like us who might have a garden and might not be sure how much or what type of fertiliser to put on our gardens. A body like the Swan River Trust can coordinate the education program around fertiliser use and can coordinate programs with local government about what to do with lawn clippings from those huge lawned foreshore reserve areas and how to make sure there is not a dreadful depositing of nutrients into the system from poor practices. Those sorts of practices and educational programs are absolutely essential, yet the information I am getting is that the government wants to cut those educational programs. I will come to that in a little more detail as well.

At this stage I want to outline a further fear of mine. I hope the minister will be able to allay my concerns in this debate. The minister has foreshadowed this implanting of the Swan River Trust and its staff into the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Effectively, it is the abolition of the Swan River Trust. I know the government is keeping the board, but it will struggle without the staffing it has at the moment, whether it is 45 or 60 people. I am sure the minister will clarify how many people are moving over to DPaW. If they are in DPaW, reporting to the director general of DPaW and responsible for the goals and objectives of DPaW, which I outlined before, how can we be sure they will be working for the Swan River Trust and meeting the objectives of things like the

Swan–Canning clean-up program and the various important strategies that have been brought into play by the Swan River Trust? How will the staff do that work if they are in an agency that has a whole other set of objectives?

I really want the minister to clarify an issue around the legislative changes he has proposed. What will be the Swan River Trust's remaining capacity to act as a development control agency? I am concerned the minister is seeking to amend elements of the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006. The minister has to tell us today whether or not that is on the cards and whether it is part of the minister's suite of legislative changes. I know some elements in the community would applaud the minister for getting rid of what they might see as green tape. The fact is that the capacity of the Swan River Trust to examine development applications is absolutely vital. The trust has the expertise to consider these things. I seek the minister's assurance there will be no watering down of the gazetted river reserve area, the development control area and the river park boundary or of the capacity of the Swan River Trust. In fact, I would like to hear the contrary and that the minister will give the board of the Swan River Trust and the people working for the trust over in DPaW additional capacity to review proposals that might be damaging to the Swan and Canning Rivers. That is what we should be hearing from the minister. Can the minister assure us today that part 5 of the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006 will remain as it stands or will be improved and that there will not be any tampering with it that will have the minister trumpeting that he has got rid of some layer of so-called green tape? That would be a real shame.

We discussed an issue that was raised by one of the government's own members. The member for South Perth raised the proposal by Catalina Adventures for seaplanes to land on the Swan River. The member for South Perth voiced legitimate concerns about that.

Mr A.P. Jacob: He is very happy now!

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I received an email on Friday of last week I think, which the member for South Perth also received last week. It showed the proposed area where these planes would take off and land. It is right next to Milyu Nature Reserve. It is proposed to be located in the buffer zone between the jet ski area and the nature reserve. The minister is contemplating—I should not prejudge the minister as he could well knock this back—a proposal, which I think is outrageous, for these seaplanes to land and take off in what was previously designated as a buffer zone between the jet ski area and the nature reserve for various bird species, including migratory birds, that use that area. The Milyu Nature Reserve is under threat, and the Swan River Trust will make recommendations to the minister about that. I do not want to see any compromising of the capacity of the Swan River Trust to make recommendations about things like that.

The role of the Swan River Trust is one of coordination. It coordinates other government agencies. The Department of Water has excellent skills in aquatic science and a great understanding of what happens around nutrient discharge and the movement of nutrient plumes into the river system. This was recognised by a former Barnett government Liberal environment minister, Hon Donna Faragher. She talked about a wetland trial to reduce the flow of nutrients into the river system. One media release of hers from 24 June 2009 stated —

The Bingham Road Creek Project is being undertaken by the Swan River Trust's Drainage Nutrient Intervention Program in partnership with the Department of Defence and Ellen Brockman Integrated Catchment Group.

The capacity of the Swan River Trust to work with other interested parties and stakeholders is critical to its success because catchment management is all about good coordination—coordination of community goodwill, coordination of other agencies and their expertise and coordination of local government. That is something that we have been looking for in the area of drainage reform. So many of the problems that we have in the Swan and Canning river system come from the lack of control that we have with drainage.

As I said before, we have situations in which creeks have been turned into drains. They carry things like the run-off from roads. The pollutants that build up in that run-off sometimes carry discharges from businesses that are unable or unwilling to correctly discharge noxious materials. The drainage is often characterised by sediment load as well. The whole system of drainage reform has been talked about in government circles for many years. The Swan River Trust is ideally placed to make it a reality, to make it happen, but I fear that if the staff are closeted away in the Department of Parks and Wildlife, it will not happen. It will be yet another blow to the idea of proper drainage reform. I understand that of all the states in Australia, Western Australia is unique in not having a formal catchment management body; other states have these bodies but WA does not. The Swan River Trust was perfectly placed to lift itself up and be that formal catchment manager. We could say that it has been in an informal catchment management role, but when an informal catchment manager does not have the capacity to really drive the change of culture required in the other agencies, amongst other players, that is a concern. We

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are the only state in Australia that does not have formal management of drainage systems in place. We have an important chance to fix that.

The minister has eliminated funding to the community environment grants program. I acknowledge the groups in the public gallery today. These people are passionate about the Swan and Canning Rivers. They have come to hear the minister make clear the position of the government when it comes to the Swan and Canning Rivers and the government's position on the Swan River Trust. They represent organisations that I am sure have been recipients of different funding rounds. They will not be recipients of the government's community environment grant anymore because the minister has got rid of it.

Mr A.P. Jacob: It ran its course.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It ran its course! When I speak to these people, they tell me about the excellent programs underway that need ongoing maintenance. For example, they can be provided with a few thousand dollars to eradicate, say, blackberry bush. It is a shame the member for Bateman is not in the chamber as I wanted to mention the Bull Creek Reserve. A substantial amount of federal funding has gone into the Brentwood foreshore through the Swan River Trust. It has got to the point where blackberry has been eradicated. But we need to get other species in there. We need to plant native species to act as nutrient filters or else the blackberry will return. It turns out that this area is shocking for the amount of nutrient that flows in there, probably from problems to do with gardens because the minister cancelled the phase-out of water-soluble fertilisers. The Barnett government failed to step up to the mark when it came to getting rid of water-soluble fertilisers. We still have huge pulses of nutrient going into that part of the Canning River. We will be stuck with the minister's failure to fund programs to create the sorts of nutrient filters that could go some way to remedying the problem because the minister is saying that a particular funding round ran its course. The problem is still there. He cannot say that it has run its course. The problem has not been totally fixed. That is just ridiculous. The minister needs to talk to the member for Bateman about that program. The member should be at the minister constantly to get extra funding to sort out the general water quality in that area to make sure it comes together.

There are many other cases involving poor funding arrangements. We do not know, for example, the future of the Swan Alcoa Landcare program. That program was built on the trust that existed between the Swan River Trust and Alcoa. The minister might be able to tell me that he is absolutely certain that Alcoa will continue to fund that program even though the staffing arrangements will be via the staff in DPaW. There are all sorts of uncertainty. This uncertainty throws things out. There is another uncertainty about the natural resource management funding. That is months behind. It is causing problems because the government just about missed the boat when it came to weed control this year. The blackberry and all the other species will be flowering now and setting seeds. I know that is not the direct fault of the minister responsible for the natural resource management funding but he should be aware of it because there is such a crossover with him and other responsible ministers. That is causing huge problems for the programs that are so necessary there.

I wanted to talk a little about what is going on higher up in the catchment, recognising that the Swan–Avon system is an area the size of Tasmania—a huge area. What goes on in the Avon River eventually comes down into the Swan. I note that under the Gallop and Carpenter governments there was the diligent production of the Avon River catchment water quality and nutrient monitoring program. I have a copy of the 2006 program and a copy of the 2007 program, which was published in March 2009. I have been checking through the library and there have been no subsequent editions. The government that the minister is a member of cancelled this program. It does not think that that important nutrient monitoring—seeing how much nitrogen and phosphorous is coming down the river system—is important. It is happy to be blindfolded to the reality of things. What a shame. What a tragedy that we do not know the truth and can see what land management changes are occurring and we will not have things like the algal bloom event that occurred in January–February 2000 when the Swan River was closed for about two weeks because of a toxic algal bloom. That was due to a massive rainfall event that happened down near Lake Grace and which washed a whole lot of nitrogen into the system. We could almost say that at point source nitrogen pollution got into the system. We will not know about that. We will not see if improvements are being made. I guess that suits the minister. He does not want to answer difficult questions about what is going on with catchment management and he does not want the hard facts in front of him so he never has to consider things that would be making such a difference like the phase-out of water-soluble fertilisers. That is another aspect to this debate. The Swan River Trust was able to play such a key coordinating role. I know that my colleagues want to speak about this issue as well. Several of them have electorates that border the Swan and Canning River systems. I wanted to remind the house of the reality that we are seeing algal blooms in the river. We have seen 14 000 or 15 000 fish deaths recently. There are many problems with the river.

I touched on the issue of the environmental education programs that the minister is looking to cancel. My understanding is that we have not only seen cuts to education in our schools, but also to environmental education

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through programs such as the EcoEducation program, the Zoo campout program, the Zoo schools community education and the former Department of Environment and Conservation's Bushrangers program—perhaps it will be called the DPaW Bushrangers. The minister will be able to allay my concerns about that one. These sorts of programs are really vital, yet I am hearing that they will be cut. That is a great shame.

I will conclude my remarks there. I look forward to the Minister for Environment's response on all these points. I expect definite clarification about whether the government proposes to make legislative changes to the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act. I hope the minister will be able to allay the house's concerns about the future of our Swan River and the people who manage it.

Finally, I thought it was absolutely dreadful when I got reports that people who work for the Swan River Trust first heard about the change when they heard me on the 10 am bulletin on ABC Radio. People told me that they had not heard about it.

Mr A.P. Jacob: That is not true.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Did the minister send out an email or circular?

Mr A.P. Jacob: They had an email from the acting director general of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, and all board members received a personal phone call from me the night before.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I heard about the personal phone calls to the board members, but when did the minister send out the —

Mr A.P. Jacob: Two emails went out to all of them.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: When did the minister send those out?

Mr A.P. Jacob: I think they went out either the night before or the morning of. They were not from me, but I will check.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The night before! So a Swan River Trust environmental officer, who was probably out in the field —

Mr A.P. Jacob: You just came in here and said you were the one who told them! That is absurd.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Sorry?

Mr A.P. Jacob: You just said that you were the one who informed everyone over the radio—that is absurd.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: No, no, no; I am telling the minister that those people contacted me to say that they heard about this on ABC Radio on the Thursday morning after I heard about it from the Minister for Environment. I was sitting in this chamber when the minister read a brief ministerial statement announcing it. I immediately went on ABC Radio to explain my concerns about that change, and then they heard about it on the radio. Those people who the minister thinks he sent an email to the night before did not get that email until afterwards. It is poor form that they should hear about this when they are out in the field doing their work as environmental officers, checking water quality and all those important jobs. That is when they heard their jobs have just been changed dramatically, if not cancelled—through ABC Radio. This shows the shabbiness of the minister's decision making and it shows that there is a lack of thought and planning with this.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [4.33 pm]: As members will know, the Swan River is at the heart of my electorate. I have campaigned long and hard on this issue on behalf of my constituents for five years. I am sure the Minister for Environment is aware of the history of the portion of the Swan River that is in my electorate. In the 2007 Swan and Canning estuaries' snapshot of the non-nutrient contaminants, Maylands, Belmont Racecourse and Burswood were the highest priority areas along the river for nutrient contaminants. We have a tremendously high level of nitrate and phosphate load in the river as it goes through Maylands. I am sure the Minister for Environment is aware that that is a function of the Bayswater Brook, or the Bayswater main drain as it used to be called before it was given the flash new name of a brook. It is a drain. It drains water across an industrial estate straight into the Swan River. The money that the Swan River Trust put into my community and into the City of Bayswater, through the Riverbank funding program, has gone some way to start to rectify that, but the maintenance and reparation work is ongoing and it is absolutely vital. The minister will remember that in 2008–09 we lost six dolphins. Tests showed astronomically high levels of dieldrin. I will read a comment from a 2010 article by Lee Bell, who the minister will know of if he has not met him personally, from National Toxics Network Incorporated. His comment is —

The Swan River is besieged by pollution of the worst type. From persistent organic pollutants such as dieldrin, heptachlor epoxide and DDE to potent endocrine disrupting herbicides such as tributyltin ... atrazine and simazine, the Swan and Canning systems are choking on pollutants.

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I mention that because these are the kinds of issues that my constituents are extremely concerned about. Members will know that I hold river forums to discuss the health of the Swan River that runs through my electorate. Over the past five years the issues that have come to our attention through those forums include things such as boat speeds and the unmonitored boat speeding that goes on through our portion of the river. As the minister would know, the Swan River Trust created a good report into wake and wave disruption at the foreshore. It relates directly to my electorate in a great way because it involves the jet ski area and the passage of boats between the Windan Bridge and the upper reaches of the Swan River around Guildford. People drive their boats at speeds well in excess of eight knots. One only has to stand by the river for about half an hour before they see someone scream down the river at far greater than eight knots. In putting these points to government I thought we had had a win when the Public Transport Authority actually agreed to lower boat speeds to six knots. Although it does not relate directly to the Swan River Trust, it relates to the health of the river. That has not yet happened in some places because a great deal of heel dragging is going on in the transport department. It claims to be doing reviews but there are still unacceptably high boat speeds on the Swan River as it goes through my electorate.

The riverbank restoration funding that the City of Bayswater has accessed through the Swan River Trust has done some excellent work for my electorate. I want to mention a few ways the trust has been able to build value for my constituents and help the river. The City of Bayswater contributed half and the riverbank funding contributed \$123 000 to get the Bath Street jetty foreshore stabilisation project off the ground. The big project is the Tranby foreshore restoration project. The riverbank foreshore restoration around Tranby so far has had about \$357 000 in riverbank project funding. If the same amount was spent every year, it would take more than 50 years to restore just the section of the river that runs through Maylands. In many respects the work of the Swan River Trust has been integral in getting this funding into critical areas that need restoration. The Bayswater foreshore environmental enhancement around Hinds Reserve and Riverside Gardens is critical to manage eco recreation and weed control, and plant local native vegetation. That is a \$187 000 project and is very valuable to my electorate.

I want to look back a bit. We can talk about rivers as conduits for water and rain, but they are far more than that. As we know, they are an integral part of the hydrologic cycle. Rivers are complex systems that have life on their banks. Their sediment carries plant and animal species that are dependent on water and vital to the function of the river system, and the wetlands along the banks filter and break down pollution. In 1988, the Swan River Trust Act was established. Its broad remit was to look at planning protection and management functions in respect to the Swan and Canning Rivers. Moving forward, in 1994 the Swan–Canning clean-up program was launched to deal with high levels of nutrients and algal blooms. That was a critical issue back then. In 2008, the Minister for the Environment, the current opposition Whip, oversaw the release of the healthy rivers program. It focused on the removal of nutrients and phosphates, and nitrogen levels in the system. Notwithstanding these interventions and the establishment of the Swan River Trust, we are still facing pollution levels in the wetlands and drains in my electorate that climb to levels that have recently seen my residents warned against letting their dogs play in the water because it is toxic. That is not the way a river should be.

I am glad that the member for Belmont is in the chamber because I have a quote of hers from 2009. The member for Belmont, who was then the Mayor of the City of Belmont, said to *The West Australian* that she was appalled that the WA government did not do more to prevent pollution and feared that a lack of funds would prevent councils from monitoring pollution properly. At the time, Mayor Godfrey said she feared pollutants were reaching the river from councils because they could not monitor pollution properly, and that both dieldrin and heptachloride were found during the autopsies of the six dolphins that died in the river in 2009. I have to agree with the member for Belmont; not enough money is being put into riverbank restoration and not enough money is being put into the Swan River Trust.

Since I started this work five years ago, I have watched the Liberal–National government walk away from the Swan River. Members have already heard that the first thing the government walked away from was the mandated phasing out of phosphorus-based fertiliser. Instead, it has relied on voluntary reductions and educating farmers. How has that gone for the minister? What has been the reduction in nitrates and phosphates in the river since he took over? I venture to say that he does not have a clue because he has not measured it. He has simply decided not to mandate the removal of the most damaging chemicals in our river system and he has not even bothered to measure the impact. That is shameful. Then he reduced funding to the Swan River Trust so that, basically, it is unable to perform effectively. He will remember that his government forced the Burswood Casino levy on us. Does he remember what that levy was for? It was for riverbank management and restoration. I remember finding out in 2009 that the Burswood Casino levy had to be used by the Swan River Trust to pay staff and to boost its operational funding because of what this government cut out of it. Now I hear that the community environment grants are going too. Shame on the minister!

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Then, of course, there are the proposed changes to local government boundaries, which will abandon the protection of foreshores and riverbanks in the Swan River because the boundaries will allow the government to basically shift the cost of maintaining the health of our rivers onto local governments. The foreshores will no longer be the established privy of a council. The government is muddying the lines. It is not being definitive about having any role in continuing to protect the Swan River. Again, shamefully, it is walking away from protecting our Swan River.

The final nail in the coffin and the final insult is abolishing the independent agency that holds sole responsibility for protecting the health of the river. Quite frankly, this is economic vandalism at its worst. The government not only does not care about the river, but also has presided over the progressive erosion of all the main protections that WA Labor put in place to address the pollution of our river systems. I looked for some historical reference and I found *Studies in Western Australian History* published in 2011. The author of the document called “A Missing History: Towards a River History of the Swan” is Sue Graham-Taylor. I will read what this historical paper says about the formation and purpose of the Swan River Trust. It states —

... the Swan River is unique, as are all rivers. So too is its place in our culture. The river is now ailing and effective decision making for the future will require support from a community that is fully informed about all aspects of the river, physical and cultural, present and past.

It also states —

The *Swan River Trust Act 1988* was a bold attempt to deal with a range of problems involved in river management including the overlapping responsibilities of various Government agencies and the inadequate coordination of agencies, especially in relation to development applications. The legislation established the Swan River Trust, an eight member body representing the community, State and local government authorities with an interest in the Swan and Canning Rivers. The aim of the legislation was to provide for ‘a single body that will be a central contact for all matters to do with the Swan and Canning Rivers’. In particular it was to provide for ‘a central decision making mechanism for all applications for development or use of the rivers and for consolidated advice to be provided to the Government’. It was claimed that the Trust would provide, for the first time, a mechanism for local government authorities to have direct input into the planning and management of the rivers.

That is what this government has taken away. It was not dreamt up overnight; the Swan River Trust took a long time to be established. Back in the 1800s, we were working out how to best manage the river’s health. It took a long time to get to the establishment of the Swan River Trust Act in 1988 and the overall oversight role of an independent body. This government has just thrown all that out the window to the detriment of not only the government, but also, most sadly, the Swan River.

I would like the minister’s view—I am sure the people who have joined us today would like his view—on who will be responsible for the coordination of agencies to improve water quality in the state without the Swan River Trust. A definitive answer to that would be useful. How will work be progressed to achieve the 30 per cent nutrient reduction target set in the Healthy Rivers program? Who will be responsible for that when the 45 or 60 or whatever number of FTEs are absorbed into the bigger department?

Mr A.P. Jacob: Fifty-eight.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Fifty-eight—whatever.

Who will be responsible for ensuring that land-use planning achieves a decrease in nutrient inputs from future land developments and does not add to the problems that the river already has? The role of the Swan River Trust was to monitor development and to help take the nutrients out of land developments. What about the on-the-ground works that the Swan River Trust has enabled to remove nutrients from drains and tributaries before water is eventually discharged into the Swan and Canning Rivers? Who will do the work on urban city drains, inner-city drains and rural drains? These are questions that the minister has not even started to answer after making this kind of dramatic change and removing a protective institution that has been much loved by many people in the community. Many people in the community have seen the benefits of the Swan River Trust and what it has been able to bring to their local efforts. The government has also reaped a huge amount over the years from the volunteers who have come through the Swan River Trust program. Please, do not throw that away; it is absolutely vital. The government cannot reject the volunteers and the wonderful support that the community has shown.

Who will establish partnerships with local government to assess, stabilise and restore foreshore areas along the Swan and Canning Rivers? Remember, the goal of the Healthy Rivers plan is to protect and rehabilitate an area equivalent to 10 per cent of the Swan and Canning Rivers foreshore every year through the Riverbank program. Who will do that? Which of the 58 FTEs in the department will be responsible for doing that? Who will improve

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the ecological health of the Swan and Canning Rivers by increasing oxygen levels through long-term, large-scale oxygenation, re-establishing the river flow regimes and trialling new intervention techniques? That is another of the critical functions of the Swan River Trust. What agency within the department will do that? Show me the FTEs. Point me to the resources. Where will that work be done? How will people be kept engaged in river protection activities? What about the River Guardians? How will they continue? How will we bring a focused approach to changing community behaviour? What will happen to the wonderful River Guardians program? If it lasts a year, we will be lucky. I am sure that the minister will change these things as well, because the program is losing its coordinating focus and its hands-on relationship to the Swan River Trust and therefore the river, the foreshores and the waterways.

Finally, who will develop and implement the research and innovation program to provide sound technical information that helps us manage the Swan and Canning river system? Where will that happen? How will that be progressed? I cannot see any opportunities for that to happen. It is not a naive assumption on my part that these things will disappear. I have watched this happen over the years in many government departments and, indeed, under many governments. This government is not the first to abolish an agency that provides independent advice just because it does not like the nature of the advice at a particular time. I am not sure what the government's rationale is, but it would not be the first government to do it.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L.L. BAKER: In wrapping up, I would like to say that I have worked with my constituents for five years, trying to maintain the health of the Swan River. We have learnt to work with the Swan River Trust and seen how effective it is in helping to manage development; it is also effective in helping to manage all the agencies across government to do their jobs more effectively. When that mechanism goes and the Swan River Trust is absorbed into the agency, so too will those responsibilities be absorbed. I know the way government departments work. Over the past 20 years, I have been involved in directing large parts of government departments. I know how this stuff is done. I have implemented re-engineered processes and merging of departments. I understand how the government talks about efficiencies and tries to bring in another department and merge the roles and responsibilities. It says, "This position used to be exclusively concerned with managing the riverbank program, but now we have a bigger program, so we are going to add to this FTE's roles and responsibilities a range of other roles and responsibilities, because basically it is all about funding, so it does not matter. It is all just work volume; it is not work value that we are changing." So the person who gets the job has more work to do, the job has fewer resources attached to it because the person has less time available, and the program eventually suffers. If not, it is absorbed into a greater program. We lose the specificity, the energy, the passion and the motivation, and, worst of all, we lose people with valuable skills and resources from these jobs. These people have been working and building relationships in our communities for many years now, and to lose that is incredibly sad.

In five years the government has made no courageous environmental decisions; in fact, it has done nothing but unpick them. All it has done is lose the state's —

Mr C.J. Barnett: What about fixing the mess you left in Esperance? What about the biodiversity issues? You can't make statements like that without some substance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Premier! The member for Maylands has the call.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Continue, member for Maylands.

Ms L.L. BAKER: This government has made no courageous environmental decisions. It has done nothing except lose the state's AAA credit rating and blame others for its ineptitude, and now it is shutting vital agencies to claw back some of the money that it has lost on its dreadful gambles in this state.

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle) [4.53 pm]: I, too, want to speak against the decision to abolish the Swan River Trust and to subsume its role into the general work of the Department of Parks and Wildlife. I join in that sentiment with the inaugural head of the Swan River Trust, Bruce Hamilton. In a report in *The West Australian* of 29 September, he bemoaned the decision to scrap the agency, saying that it is a retrograde step that will lead to worse environmental outcomes. He said that axing the watchdog and rolling it into Western Australia's main environmental department smacked of recklessness. The report further states —

It came after the trust's latest annual report showed nutrient levels and indicators of algal growth were above acceptable limits in many parts of the river system.

To continue quoting Bruce Hamilton, the inaugural head of the Swan River Trust, he stated —

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Abolishing the trust meant there would be less accountability for managing the rivers, while there was also a risk the DPAW —

That is, the Department of Parks and Wildlife —

would struggle to give them enough money and attention.

I think that is the real concern and the motivation behind this motion today.

I want to talk specifically about the work on the East Fremantle foreshore and the need for protection of that foreshore area, which members of the local community have raised with me. As other speakers have said, no-one is fooled by the minister's platitudes that axing the trust would result in an improvement of the urgent work needed for the Swan and Canning Rivers. The decision is clearly nothing more than a cost-cutting measure, pure and simple, and we are concerned that those rivers will be worse off. As I said, I am specifically concerned about the effect of this decision on the foreshore at East Fremantle, which has for some time been showing severe signs of degradation.

For some time a local action group called the Friends of East Fremantle Foreshore has been trying to get action on the rehabilitation and protection of this part of the river. I have met with the Friends of East Fremantle Foreshore, which showed me firsthand examples of the erosion that is occurring along parts of the Swan River foreshore. The particular concern is about the frontage opposite Leeuwin Barracks, so it is the area near a cafe called Zephyr Cafe and Kiosk and the Swan Yacht Club. The Friends of East Fremantle Foreshore are concerned that some work that has been done by the trust and the Town of East Fremantle council is at risk. They accessed some of the Swan River Trust's foreshore rehabilitation money. I think about \$30 000 was put in through the trust, and over \$75 000 was contributed by the council. So some work has been done, but that work is at risk. Unless it is followed up now with further work, it will simply be working backwards. I think that is the point that the member for Gosnells made about some of the weed eradication programs. They need to be followed up, and that work needs to be progressed; otherwise it is a waste of time.

The sign of degradation of that foreshore area is that some very advanced trees, including some very old palms, now have their roots completely exposed. As I said, one of the big concerns is that work that has been done to establish trees and shrubs, as well as sandbagging in that area, is now at risk of being lost. The obvious concern is that the decision to abolish the trust will result in less, not more, resources and attention to foreshore rehabilitation and that local councils will be left holding the baby of foreshore rehabilitation, weed eradication and those other programs that are so important.

The Friends of East Fremantle Foreshore met with me, as I said, and relayed to me that it had confidence that the Swan River Trust's commitment to and expertise in that foreshore rehabilitation was genuine and that the trust had been working with the council and the community to access specific project funds to put in place proactive and long-lasting strategies. Already that work is challenging, and the real concern is that this decision to abolish the trust is a step backwards. One of the projects undertaken was around the boat ramp and the car park—that is, the vegetation just in front of the car park and alongside the boat ramp. That is a positive project, but it is only part of the exercise there. It is a very popular area of the foreshore, and the work is urgent and needs to be progressed. I think the community has every reason to be dismayed at the decision to abolish the trust and what that will mean for this urgent work.

The big concern is that the Department of Parks and Wildlife, which is already finding it difficult to carry out its work, will, under the weight of this government's budget cuts, struggle to give the river and projects such as this foreshore rehabilitation the attention they need. We could give many examples of calls by the community for urgent attention to the health of the river. We have already heard about algal levels in the river and the need to address run-off into the river, but one issue that I bring to the attention of the house today took place in 2006. It was in that year that more than 3 000 fish died due to algal blooms, and obviously there was a lot of concern. The editorial published in *The West Australian* on 11 April 2006 stated, in part —

If the Government hopes that people will get used to the idea that the river will die from the recurrent algal blooms, then it has made a grave political miscalculation. People will not forgive any government that does not do enough to save their river.

That comment is as relevant today as it was in 2006.

The Swan River Trust was established more than 20 years ago as a caretaker of one of our most loved and famed natural treasures. In the words of Rob Hammond, who I quoted earlier, scrapping the trust amounts to fiddling while Rome burns, and fixing the rivers needs more money, not a different manager.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [5.01 pm]: I also rise to make some brief remarks on the motion moved by the member for Gosnells —

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That this house condemns the Barnett government's failure to protect the environmental health of the Swan and Canning Rivers, and for abolishing the Swan River Trust.

I make the point that anybody who has actually talked to the people directly involved in groups that are trying to protect the Swan River will know that the decision by the state government to abolish the Swan River Trust has been received very badly. All one has to do is talk to any of the groups involved in protecting the health of the river to know that this is a bad decision. Anyone who argues that this is not a bad decision does so only because they have not spoken to anyone who is actually involved in the real work of trying to protect and improve the Swan and Canning Rivers.

The Canning River is, in fact, the spine of my electorate; it is the key geographical feature that contributes to the district. Of course, Cannington comes from "Canning Town"—the town on the Canning River. There were originally market gardens and small acreages around 100 to 150 years ago, and it has now developed into the present-day commuter suburbs of that area. When we consider the health of the Swan and Canning Rivers, it is important to understand that it is about managing the catchment. It is not just the water running through; it is managing the whole of the catchment. When we look at managing the Swan and Canning Rivers, we have to look at the big picture and actually look at every aspect of the water that flows from wherever it flows, into the Canning River and into the Swan River.

In doing so, we have to think about fertilisers. The former Labor government introduced a mandatory code to take phosphates out of fertilisers, and it is interesting to know why it did that. It did that because the fertiliser manufacturers asked us to. They pointed out that if we were to have a voluntary code, no-one would adhere to it because there is money involved, whereas if it were compulsory to remove phosphates from fertilisers, all the manufacturers would be equally impacted. That would then lead to the withdrawal of that contaminant from our waterways over time. Of course, it would take 10, 20 or 30 years for all the phosphates in the catchment to be naturally dealt with by the catchment system, but at least we would not be adding to that load.

However, because farmers did not want phosphates removed from fertilisers, one of the incoming Barnett government's first decisions was to reverse that decision. But the fact that the phosphates are flowing into the rivers shows that they are not being used by the plants, because if they were, they would not end up in the river system. So the first decision in the environment space made by this government, when it was elected in 2008, was to reverse that crucial decision—a decision that had the support of the manufacturers of fertilisers. The effect would be to make sure that farmers paid only for the fertilisers they actually used, rather than paying for fertilisers they do not use, which is what they are doing at the moment; the fertilisers are actually contaminating the rivers. That is the sort of short-sighted decision-making process that is reflected in the decision we are debating today—particularly, the decision to abolish the Swan River Trust.

I want to mention an organisation based in my electorate, SERCUL—the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare. I know that the member for Gosnells also mentioned SERCUL, which is located in Beckenham, right on the edge of my electorate. It does great work in not only the electorate of Cannington, but also all over the metropolitan region. It is a remarkable organisation that celebrated its tenth anniversary in July. Unfortunately, I was on holiday with my daughter and I missed the celebration at its facility in Beckenham, but I know that the member for Gosnells attended, and a number of members of SERCUL are present in the gallery today, including Pat Hart, the chair, and Julie Roberts, the chief executive officer. SERCUL is a clear demonstration of the multiplier benefit of community organisations. Small contributions by the state government are multiplied by the hard work of the staff and volunteers of SERCUL and all the other organisations that are related to it. They are the ones doing the good work on the ground; they are the ones who are actually, day-by-day, trying to improve the health of the rivers. The health of the Swan and Canning Rivers will not be improved by a couple of bureaucrats sitting in an office drawing up a plan; it is SERCUL and the other organisations it works with that will do the good work on the ground to make a difference to the health of the rivers.

The government announced in its budget that it would be shutting down the community grants program. That will have a direct impact on the health of the river because SERCUL and some of the other groups that I will mention in a minute will not be able to continue doing the work that those funds have supported in the past, so we will not get a multiplier benefit out of those community organisations. I will make some comments about that in a minute.

I would just like to acknowledge some of the groups that work in my electorate and that SERCUL also works with. They include the Canning River Regional Park Volunteers; the Two Rivers Catchment Group—I was very pleased on National Tree Day this year to go to Canning Weir to plant trees with that group; the Wilson Wetlands Action Group; the Friends of the Brixton Street Wetlands; the Bannister Creek Catchment Group; and the Friends of Queens Park Bushland, just to highlight a number of groups that work in my electorate. They

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make a real difference on the ground. We recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Wilson Wetlands Action Group, and there was a photographic display showing the huge difference that that group has made in Wilson through the work that it does, and the change over the years of all the different places it has worked on. Each of those groups can be justifiably proud. Last year I went to the anniversary celebrations of the Friends of Queens Park Bushland and again, that group was able to show how, over a period of years, the hard work of community members multiplies the effectiveness of the grants that the government provides. That is the way the Swan and Canning Rivers are going to be improved—not by bureaucratic shuffling, not by making excuses and not by talking, but by doing, and those groups are all doers. They are all people who actually get on and achieve.

The Canning River Regional Park is magnificent; whenever I talk to people about it, I call it the Kings Park of the east. That is really what it is. Recently, I was pleased to join the South East Regional Centre of Urban Landcare WA that had Atlas Iron provide a volunteer day. Atlas Iron is a company that mines in the Pilbara and it wanted to make a contribution, so some of its staff and contractors —

Mr A.P. Jacob: Give one program.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Thank you, minister. I was there with them and I know what they called it. They called it a workday for them. I was with a couple of the SERCUL employees and the volunteers from Atlas Iron who were giving up their time. I was very pleased to help them plant sedges in the wetlands at Liege Street, with very attractive gumboots on wading through the waters and ensuring that we protected the new sedges from the swamp fowls that come along and pull up all the hard work. That is the sort of thing that can be done by volunteer groups. It will not be achieved by the Minister for Environment changing the name of an organisation or abolishing the only organisation that is solely focused on the Swan and Canning Rivers. That will not achieve it; it will be achieved by the hard work of organisations like SERCUL and other catchment groups that do the work on the ground. The minister is withdrawing support.

One of the things that the Minister for Environment did this year was to call for nominations for the Western Australian Environment Awards. SERCUL won the 2012 Environment Award. Its website carries a photograph of its team with the well-deserved award. The minister asked people to nominate for the Environment Awards and then he cancelled it on the basis that it was an extravagance. I do not know why he would issue a media release asking people to apply for an award when he thinks it is an extravagance, yet that is exactly what this minister did. That is another example of the fact that this minister does not get it in relation to the environment. He thinks that his achievements will make a difference to the Swan and Canning Rivers. They never will. What will make a difference is the work of these groups, not withdrawing resources from these groups, which is what the minister is doing. Every day he has been in office he has been cutting resources available to the community for volunteer groups. That means the situation will go backwards.

The Atlas Iron people at the Canning River Regional Park—all of whom at the site that I was working at at least did not live in the local area—were astounded by the high-quality community facility of the Canning River Regional Park. I encourage everybody to come and have a look. As the Canning River Regional Park is in the City of Canning, it ends at Nicholson Road. Across the bridge on the other side of Nicholson Road is Hester Park. Since I was elected and local residents talked to me about the need for work on Hester Park, I have been lobbying to try to get the City of Gosnells to work as hard on Hester Park as the City of Canning and the volunteer groups have on the Canning River Regional Park. I am pleased that the City of Gosnells has allocated \$100 000 towards creating a master plan. They needed some money from the state government, so I lobbied the Minister for Planning. I was very pleased to recently receive a letter from the minister saying that the state government has allocated \$150 000—so that is now \$250 000—for the City of Gosnells to create a master plan for Hester Park. That will not instantly fix Hester Park, but it will provide a clear strategy to move forward. That will be done only by local people in the area. I know that SERCUL is very excited about the idea of work being done on Hester Park. I have spoken to Julie and Pat and others at SERCUL about the opportunities that will be presented in the future as we move forward with Hester Park.

I also draw attention to Mills Park in Beckenham. The City of Gosnells has a great plan for a refreshment of all the community facilities in the park. The city has been good because its master plan takes account of the needs of the environment. Both Woodlupine Brook and Yule Brook run through Mills Park, and the City of Gosnells' plan takes account of the needs of those two brooks to ensure that they will be improved over time. I would like to think that over time the City of Gosnells could work on Woodlupine Brook to make it more of a living stream. That is the plan for Mills Park, but beyond Mills Park, I would like to see more work done to create a living stream of Woodlupine Brook as it flows through the suburb of Beckenham.

I also commend all the great work done on Bannister Creek by the Bannister Creek Catchment Group. This creek, at least the bit that I am interested in, runs through Ferndale and Lynwood. The volunteers do a great job.

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That little piece of catchment for the Swan and Canning Rivers is completely surrounded by houses, and the work that is done there is great. In the middle of houses in those two suburbs is a piece of natural environment. The Minister for Housing is not here, but I point out that the bushland at lot 500 Karri Way will be a great accompaniment to the Bannister Creek area because it is quite close.

I also note that work is needed on the wetlands on Lake Street in Cannington. Jo Stone from the Canning River Regional Park volunteers is always in my ear about the need to treat the Lake Street wetlands sensitively. There is a lot of opportunity to improve the area. All these different things can be done, but they will not be done by a minister issuing a press release; they are going to be done by people doing work on the ground, and the only people around to do the work on the ground are the volunteer groups. Every time the government withdraws resources available to those groups, it makes it harder for the work on the ground to be done.

I now make a point about the drains that serve Queens Park, East Cannington, Cannington, and Beckenham in particular, as well as Ferndale and Lynwood but in a separate drainage system. Without those drains, the whole area would return to being wetlands and people would not be able to live there. The decision to drain that area was made a long time ago, and it is not something that can be reversed.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The point here is that we have to ensure that those drains are properly managed. Again, it will not be the Water Corporation, which owns the drains, managing them; it will be volunteer groups. As they finish work on one area, they make decisions as to how they can go ahead and work on those other drains. It will be good. One of the problems is that those drains are very narrow and steep-sided. I am indebted to the people at SERCUL who explained that the faster the water flows, the more likely it is that sediment will go into the Canning and Swan Rivers. Part of the process is to deal with the potential run-off sediment out of those drains. Again, that will not be done by the Minister for Environment issuing a press release or cutting staffing numbers.

The Canning Weir at Kent Street needs to be addressed. This is a multimillion-dollar project, minister, and it was a commitment that we on this side would have acted upon had we been elected. It is probably time for the Liberal Party to step up because it is time for work to be done on Kent Street weir.

Mr A.P. Jacob: It is a Water Corporation asset.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I do not care whose asset it is, minister—action needs to be taken! If the minister is happy to spend the money, I am happy for him to spend the money, but he is not particularly senior in cabinet and I cannot see anybody agreeing to let him spend money. I do not care who it is, minister!

Certainly abolishing the Swan River Trust is not going to make it easier for the Minister for Environment to get the money.

Mr C.J. Barnett: He's a lot more senior than you are right now.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, Premier.

Mr C.J. Barnett: He is.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It will be interesting to see. If the minister can deliver the money for the weir, I will call him senior. There he goes; he has a challenge; he has three years to get the money.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Tell him that if it happens, he will be senior!

Mr D.C. Nalder: He might be Premier by then!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Ha, ha! We know that will not happen under the current Premier.

Another issue has been raised with me about powerboats on Canning River upstream from Shelley Bridge. Some people want restrictions on powerboats on the upstream side of Shelley Bridge. I think the government should consider that. It is only a small area, but it probably would have a good effect on improving the life of the river.

I want to finish on a couple of matters. I mentioned the Bush Forever site at lot 500 Karri Way, the old Ferndale primary school, but I want to refer to other Bush Forever sites in my electorate and elsewhere. I make the point that the Bush Forever sites are the result of a process started by the Court government. It is always amusing to me that while the Labor Party was in power, the Liberal Party used to criticise the Bush Forever process, yet it was a process started by the Liberal government.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It certainly wasn't criticised by me.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Minister for Planning might have been the only Liberal not criticising it.

The point I make is that it is one thing to identify the sites; it is another thing to manage them. The problem is that the government is not providing any resources for the management of Bush Forever sites, and it is time it

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did. The problem is that if they are not properly managed, instead of them being an important part of our local environments, they become run-down, disused and criticised by local residents who say that they are a fire risk. The government therefore has to think about how it will manage the Bush Forever sites, as they are important parts of the catchments. Again, cutting funds to volunteer groups will not make management of the Bush Forever sites better. As I say, it will never be a bureaucrat sitting in an office that manages a Bush Forever site; it is much more likely to be a group like SERCUL and others that do that work.

I actually have one more matter to refer to after this. I want to refer to the City of Canning Bush Crew. I know that various volunteer groups have a good relationship with the City of Canning Bush Crew. The crew can be relied on to do good work at different sites. The City of Canning is about to be cut up by the Minister for Local Government and we are all nervous about what is going to happen. This is one of the examples that we do not know about. The City of Gosnells does not have the same level of experience and commitment to maintain the local environment. This is therefore another example of the amalgamation process. It is not reform. There is no local government reform in Western Australia. There are only amalgamations, and we do not know where this issue is going.

I want to congratulate the Bannister Creek Catchment Group, SERCUL and Lynwood Senior High School for the work they have done together. On 23 September I was very pleased to attend Lynwood Senior High School for the opening of its wetlands. The school built that using a grant from BP. On the same day the school also formally opened its hydroponics garden and fish farm, which was built partly with money from the National Australia Bank. The Linking Education and Families program and the concentration on environmental science at Lynwood Senior High School are fabulous. The leadership there from the principal, Gary Anderson, is clear to see by everybody involved in the school, as I am as a member of the board. The school has a good, strong working relationship with Bannister Creek Catchment Group. Frequently students go out and work with the catchment group on maintaining and improving Bannister Creek through Ferndale and Lynwood. It is a great example of what can be done. Unfortunately, if the government is concentrating on cutting funds, these things will not work out as well in the future.

I will finish by saying that it is not as though the government does not have any money. It is spending \$440 million on Elizabeth Quay.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We're not.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Premier, go and read your budget.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Guess what will be received from land sales?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Who knows whether anything will be received? In 30 years when the last block gets sold, come and talk to me, minister.

Ms R. Saffioti: It's actually more than \$440 million.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, of course. It is \$440 million plus the Water Corporation money plus the Western Power money. I forgot that too.

Ms R. Saffioti: Plus the roads budget.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, and the roads budget as well.

Mr J.H.D. Day: The net cost will probably be very little.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, the net cost will probably be about \$450 million. No-one will go there when it is finished because there will be nothing there.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You won't be there because they won't have boring people there. There will be people having fun and a good time; people with energy, vitality and vibrancy.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I tell you what: when the Premier wakes up and interjects, it is always entertainment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Members, the member on his feet has six minutes of speaking time left. Please do not yell across the chamber at him.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker.

Do members know how many coffee shops are going to be built for that \$440 million? None!

Several members interjected.

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Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Not a single building is being built for the \$440 million of expenditure; not one building—not a single coffee shop, not a single shop and not a single office. Not a single building is being built at Elizabeth Quay—not one.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The government could spend \$440 million and create 1 600 construction jobs and do something useful; do something that works, something that improves the state. Instead the government is spending \$440 million on 11 blocks of land on which it will then plant grass. The minister has announced that when the government is finished spending on Elizabeth Quay, it will go back and plant grass on those 11 blocks of land. The vibrancy plan from the Minister for Planning is to plant grass on top of the 11 blocks of land. The government has been trying for two years to sell the first block of land. How many offers has the government had? Minister, how many people have offered to buy the first block?

Mr J.H.D. Day: Actually there has been an expression-of-interest process for lots 9 and 10.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes.

Mr J.H.D. Day: There are about 14 expressions of interest.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Okay.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It has now narrowed down to one preferred proponent.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: One preferred proponent!

Mr J.H.D. Day: You only have one buyer, you know. You don't sell it to numerous people.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There are 11 blocks of land and the government has one buyer for one block; and it does not even have an agreement to sell the block! That is 11 blocks of land and one person wants to buy one block. There are 11 blocks of land and one offer.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It's not like it's been put out on the market yet.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We also have the problem that the minister's own departmental advice shows that the inlet will not flush.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Says who?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Says the minister's own advice. His own professional advice says that there will be no flushing of the inlet. The minister could have spent the \$440 million on fixing the weir in Canning River. He could have spent it on a fertiliser action program. He could have spent it on fixing the river walls in South Perth. He could have done all those things, but he chose not to. He chose to build 11 empty blocks. There will be no coffee shop, no museum, no cable car to Kings Park—nothing! None of those things is being built by this government; \$440 million will be tipped on the ground. Not a single thing is being built. There will be no flushing of the inlet. Nobody will be going there, because when the Premier goes there and cuts the ribbon, there will be grass—11 blocks of grass. That is what this government has spent \$440 million on!

Mr C.J. Barnett: Do us all a favour and stay away from Elizabeth Quay! Do not go there.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is interesting the Premier says that, because this is exactly what is happening. There has been a 10 per cent reduction in the number of visitations to the belltower since the construction of Elizabeth Quay commenced. The prediction was that four and a half million people would visit the belltower. There were 54 000! My constituents do not want Elizabeth Quay. They think it not only is a waste of time, but also will affect their travel time to work, the hospital and the university. I have a term for the Premier—opportunity cost! The Premier cannot spend the money he has spent on Elizabeth Quay anywhere else. The Premier has deliberately taken that money out of the environmental movement and removed the opportunity to support the Swan and Canning Rivers and put it into a white elephant.

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef — Minister for Environment) [5.30 pm]: I say right from the outset that contrary to reports in the media, statements by the member for Gosnells and other members opposite, and indeed the motion that is before us today, the Swan River Trust has not been abolished. The Swan River Trust is not proposed to be abolished and it is not being axed. The Swan River Trust board will continue.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: But with no staff!

Mr A.P. JACOB: The staff of the Swan River Trust are under the employing authority of the Department of Parks and Wildlife already; the trust does not employ them.

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr A.P. JACOB: Member for Gosnells, I have some time to go and I will address all of that, including your comments. As I said, the Swan River Trust board will continue to operate as an independent advisory body to the Minister for Environment. It will continue to provide high-level advice on the Swan Canning Riverpark based on a similar model to the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. Members will be aware that the government recently announced its intention to merge the staff on the operational side of the Swan River Trust within the Department of Parks and Wildlife to improve resources for the management and protection of the Swan and Canning Rivers and their catchments. That is something I consider to be a relatively straightforward machinery-of-government change. It sits well within the spirit of the government's first commitment in the biodiversity and conservation policy it took to the March state election to create a dedicated conservation agency for the state of Western Australia.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Members opposite may have read that policy. I will get to the issue of policies in a second. Members who read that policy would have noted that it was certainly within the spirit of our election promise. If members read the policy, they will see that it makes specific reference to the management of river parks.

Mr M. McGowan: I read the policy and there was nothing about abolishing the Swan River Trust.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The policy certainly said that the new conservation agency will manage river parks. I will move on. As I said, this is the right decision and this debate has afforded me the opportunity to go through why this is the right decision. We are going to gain from the economies of scale, and bringing them together will combine the knowledge and expertise of both agencies. Catching interjections about policy from members opposite, they bemoaned what they called bureaucratic readjustment and other such terms. When I came into the role of minister, there was a lot of reading to do and a lot of briefings, particularly with the many agencies in the environment portfolio. I obviously wanted to make sure I was full bottle on the policies that we took to the election. I also thought it would be interesting to read the policies that my opponents took to the election. I suspect the member for Gosnells might not have read the Labor Party's policy platform at the last state election, so I will enlighten him. The policy reads —

... Labor believes that our state's ... waterways and catchments lack the robust, comprehensive governance mechanisms, which are needed to deliver the policy, and planning required to cope effectively with modern demands on the natural resources of the aquatic environment.

To that end, Labor will replace existing, separated jurisdictional responsibilities for management of oceans and rivers with a system which will be the basis for whole of government policy direction —

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have not finished, members! It continues —

supported by dedicated implementation and service delivery.

That is very good. I could not agree more. It continues —

... Labor will, as a matter of urgency:

...

Revise the governance provisions relating to the Swan Canning river system ...

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Would members opposite like me to read that again? Has the member for Gosnells read this document?

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is not what the Labor Party's policy is implying. Unfortunately, I do not think I can take full credit for the idea, as members opposite had the same approach. However, given the position members opposite are taking today, I am operating under the assumption that they probably will not support the legislative changes I propose to introduce in this place. I am absolutely delighted this will be a reform that I can well and truly put my stamp on, and I thank members opposite for that.

This new combined Swan River Trust and Department of Parks and Wildlife workforce will unite a range of experience leading to a streamlined river management service that we believe will help improve the protection of the river system. River conservation efforts will be significantly boosted by bringing in expertise and capacities from the Department of Parks and Wildlife. The department has some 1 600 staff.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: You haven't used the term "catchment management" once, because you do not understand what it is!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am only five minutes into my response, member for Gosnells.

A number of references were made to the volunteer network, and the Swan River Trust has done some good work in this space. This is not about having a crack at one agency or another. There are significant strengths and expertise in both agencies. I can see only good opportunities by bringing them together. Combining the Swan River Trust with the Department of Parks and Wildlife will give the department a boost from the trust's expertise, volunteer capacity and knowledge. Similarly, the Department of Parks and Wildlife will assist on the Swan River Trust side. It is a good idea, and that is why it was in Labor's policy, as it was in our policy.

Mr M. McGowan: It was not in our policy. You are misleading the house.

Mr A.P. JACOB: So even though I read verbatim the policy, I have completely misread Labor's policy at the last state election?

Ms R. Saffioti: Table it!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am happy to table it! It is headed "WA Labor FINAL Platform 2011". I read out what it said, but I will repeat it. It reads —

To that end, Labor will replace existing, separated jurisdictional responsibilities for management of oceans and rivers with a system which will be the basis for whole of government policy direction supported by dedicated implementation and service delivery.

...

... Labor will, as a matter of urgency:

...

Revise the governance provisions relating to the Swan Canning river system ...

When we get to the end of this debate, I will send the member a copy of it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Are you tabling it, minister?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am not finished, Madam Acting Speaker, but I am happy to.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Excuse me, I am on my feet. I understand the minister has agreed to table the paper at the end of his presentation.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Madam Acting Speaker, I am still referring to it.

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is fine. I am just clarifying a point.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Members opposite, I have 53 minutes remaining.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is a rare event that a government has to table a policy of the opposition because they don't know what it is about. It must be a first for the Parliament!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will assist members opposite, Premier. I refer to page 36, so members opposite do not have to go all the way through the document to find it, as many of them have obviously not read the document before. I have 53 minutes left, and I refer members opposite to page 36 of "WA Labor FINAL Platform 2011", chapter 3, "Conservation, the environment and climate change".

Mrs M.H. Roberts: So it is not a policy!

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is your 2011 platform!

Ms R. Saffioti: That is not what you said! If you don't understand the difference, you are stupider than I thought!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am clearly getting under the member's skin. Did the Labor Party have a subsequent environment policy in place? I would love to see it. Members opposite must have taken it straight off the website after the state election!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, it is not possible for Hansard to record this debate. If the minister wants interruptions and interjections while he is on his feet, please ask for them—do not accept them otherwise. Let us continue with some balance in the debate.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2013]

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I do not mind the interruptions.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Hansard does.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said, Labor's final platform is clearly spelt out at the top of its document. By all means, correct me, member. All I can do is go on the document that was authorised by Mr S. Mead, and I assume that is accurate. The member can certainly enlighten me about the Labor Party's own policy. I am concerned that none of its members seem to have read it.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, I have warned you. I will call people now. Please do not interject.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said, a key component of this—I will try to come back to the motion—is the volunteer network that both of those agencies have access to. The Department of Parks and Wildlife's volunteer network is by no means insignificant. We are talking about a network of some 4 700 dedicated Western Australians and the management of the river park being integrated with both the conservation side and also the promotion of Western Australia's marine and national parks, which will ultimately only bring far better outcomes for conservation of the catchment, conservation of the river park itself and conservation of land management right across the state of Western Australia.

The Swan River Trust comprises 58 staff—in answer to the member for Gosnells' earlier question. That includes planners, environmental scientists, educators and technical staff. A very good example of where we can get the synergies of bringing these two agencies together is that the Swan River Trust currently employs one landscape architect whereas the Department of Parks and Wildlife has a team of eight. I only did first-year landscape architecture but I did some significant studies in this area. I can assure members—this is by no means a reflection on the person in the Swan River Trust—that it is very hard to operate in a creative design industry when one effectively operates by oneself. There are huge opportunities for that person now coming into a team of nine. The opportunity to get quality critical feedback on their work will enhance not only their career, but also the work and outcomes, and it will give everybody a better landscape architectural result up and down the Swan River. This is one very simple example of where this will deliver significant outcomes right across the chain. This will be a fantastic opportunity for a number of Swan River Trust staff.

I am obviously sympathetic to some disquiet around change. Change is never easy. This is a very positive change for most of those people. If we think of those 58 staff, it is a relatively small pool. This is an opportunity for them to significantly expand their horizons within a far larger agency and reap the benefits of that. It is a positive move all-round. A number of reserves along the Swan and Canning Rivers, such as the Swan Estuary Marine Park, Pelican Point Nature Reserve, Matilda Bay Reserve, Canning River Regional Park and Walyunga and Avon Valley National Parks, are managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This is again an example of where some of that duplication can be removed and also streamlined. As I said earlier, the Department of Parks and Wildlife is already the employing authority for the Swan River Trust. It provides a range of corporate services to the trust. This amalgamation will again assist in further streamlining these existing relationships and will see these 58 staff join a staff complement of around 1 600. It will reduce duplication and increase efficiency right across the board and also bring additional expertise and resources to the river conservation efforts. As I said at the time of the announcement, this is a machinery-of-government change only; it is not associated with any funding cuts or staffing cuts. All these staff will find careers and continue within the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Indeed, I think they will have augmented careers within the Department of Parks and Wildlife as those operational arms move over and join up.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Does that mean that there will be people from the Department of Parks and Wildlife who might find themselves now working in the area of the Swan and Canning Rivers?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Absolutely, yes.

Mr J.E. McGrath: But the staffing in those areas will not change?

Mr A.P. JACOB: No. There will just be the bringing together of those two agencies. There is one example that came to mind, though I have not confirmed this with the directors general who will ultimately be responsible for the direction of staff. We have quite a well-known whale entanglement team operating within the Department of Parks and Wildlife that does very good work. On rough, stormy days, obviously they cannot get out onto the ocean and chase whales. Perhaps there are some really good synergies in the one organisation, which is just a phone call away and can be called onto the river. Fingers, the dolphin, had been entangled in some fishing line and we are doing some work in that space, which I might speak about later if I get the opportunity. Again, that is a very good example of the synergy.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2013]

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Or better still, minister, educate people to not discard fishing line.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Absolutely; I could not agree more, member.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: The Swan River Trust has the capacity to deliver that sort of program.

Mr A.P. JACOB: We are working with it, and that work will continue. We are doing some work in that space and there will be more to come on that later. I could not agree with the member more. It is a very upsetting matter for me personally as well.

I have been encouraged by the letters and words of support that I have received on this amalgamation. It is not all doom and gloom, as members opposite would have us believe. Some very positive feedback has come through this process. Preparation of legislation to give effect to the amalgamation is underway, with amendments being required to both the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006 and the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. If time permits, I will get to some of the specific questions that the member for Gosnells asked about the proposed amendments to those two acts.

The amalgamation of the Swan River Trust staff into the Department of Parks and Wildlife absolutely does not jeopardise funding arrangements for our river foreshore programs and projects. In fact, being in a large agency with larger budget resources should potentially provide some avenues to resources that were not available previously. Management and protection of our Swan and Canning River system is an ongoing and complex task. We certainly agree with members opposite and have a passionate belief that the river is an iconic piece of conservation estate here in the state of Western Australia and one that we certainly need to look after. The state government remains firmly committed to ensuring that a wide range of programs are being delivered to restore and protect the health of our rivers.

I will quickly go back into history and refer to some of the comments you made, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms L.L. Baker), about some of the history of the river going back to the 1800s. I see three key legacy issues that are affecting the health of the Swan River. We hope to make a positive impact on them but all three of them are things that any government of the day will struggle to make any meaningful change and irreversibly change the nature of the Swan River. The first of these is the removal of the bar at the river mouth by C.Y. O'Connor in the late 1800s, which essentially changed it from a fresh water system into an estuarine system. The Acting Speaker would know, as member for Maylands, that we have significant issues further up. That was a legacy issue at the time. I will not go into the decision that was made well over 100 years ago. That is providing a significant challenge for the river going forward and it will be an estuarine system into the future; I think we have to accept that. Another significant change is the damming of many of the tributaries, particularly Canning Dam. That has significantly changed the flows. One of the biggest challenges—there is no avoiding it—is the declining rainfall in the south west region. That will also have a significant impact on the ongoing health of the river.

I would like to put on record in the strongest terms that the claims in the media that the river is dead are factually incorrect. The river is not without its health challenges going forward. Many of them date back well over a century. It is simply not true to say that the river is dead. This is supported by any of the current monitoring and science and it is not supported by the Swan River Trust. The 2013 Murdoch University report on the fish communities in the estuary by the Centre for Fish, Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Research shows the estuary to be in good to fair condition overall based on the fish communities index and suggests an overall improvement in the estuarine conditions since the mid-2000s. Indeed, the 2012 report presents similar findings. If you are happy to indulge me, Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to go through some of these initiatives, particularly since the mid-2000s, which have seen an improvement in the health of the river. They obviously deal with decades, if not more than a century, of legacy issues. However, the health of the river is on the mend, albeit it is still in a serious state and requires serious attention. We want to take it from where it is to a healthier state. That is what this merger is about. It also generally addresses some of the projects that we are doing in and around the Swan and Canning Rivers.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: The 13 000 fish that turned up dead and belly up in August last year, what was that about?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will get through all the programs that we are doing, member for Gosnells.

Mr W.J. Johnston: He does not know!

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thanks, member for Cannington, for that interjection. I notice the member has a copy of his own policy. I suspect that is the first time any member opposite has actually read it.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It is not our policy, you idiot! It is called a platform.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr D.C. NALDER: I heard the minister being referred to as an idiot. I think that is unbecoming of Parliament.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2013]

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): I agree. Whoever referred to the minister as an idiot, please retract that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I retract.

Point of Order

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister referred to something that misled the house. He does not know the difference between a party platform and an election policy that was taken to the 2013 election. We have pointed that out on numerous occasions to the minister and he continues to mislead the house. I urge the Acting Speaker to make sure the minister does not continue to mislead the house. If he does not know the difference, I ask him to inform himself of the difference.

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, but I do take the point. Minister, I assume you have taken the point as well.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I would love nothing more than a briefing on the difference between a Labor Party platform and a Labor Party policy!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is that an invitation from the minister for us to do that?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, I do not think that is a point of order.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If he is inviting interjection, I am happy to give it to him. I am happy to inform him of these things, but if he is not interested in that, maybe he should just keep to the facts and stop confusing everybody with the fact that he is not telling the truth.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member. I have got the message. That is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr A.P. JACOB: I would be only too happy to apologise to the house if I have got this in any way wrong and that it was my mistake that the Labor Party's final 2011 platform actually had nothing to do with the Labor Party's policy. Clearly, different language is used by members opposite. I thought that a policy platform was a policy.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That demonstrates how stupid you are!

Mr A.P. JACOB: Absolutely, member; I am sure you will take the opportunity to educate me! However, while the member quibbles about whether it might be a platform or a policy, the words contained within it cannot be avoided.

Mr W.J. Johnston: What was your policy?

Mr A.P. JACOB: We had a very clear biodiversity and conservation policy. The very first item listed within that biodiversity and conservation policy was —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, this will take a long time to get through if you keep yelling interjections across the chamber. Minister, would you please continue on your feet. If you do not want interjections, can you direct your comments through the Chair, please?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. As I said, our biodiversity and conservation policy was obviously taken to the previous election by my colleague the member for Nedlands, who was then the Minister for Environment. I refer to the very first policy contained within it, after it listed all of the achievements, which actually were all of our commitments in 2008, incidentally; I might have a chance to address that later. Our number one commitment was to create a dedicated conservation agency in Western Australia. I see this as a process that certainly augments that commitment. The policy clearly referenced river parks being managed within that dedicated agency. I am not saying that it was spelt out per se, but there was a clear policy commitment to a conservation agency and clearly we said river parks would be a part of that.

Mr W.J. Johnston: You have never read the policy!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am certainly looking forward to your —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Have you read page 14?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I cannot see what that is from here, member for Cannington. Yes, I have, many times.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): Member for Cannington, I am calling you for the first time.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

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The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I called you for the first time.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for West Swan!

Mr A.P. JACOB: The opposition has clearly been caught flat-footed not having read its own platform. I know ours. I do not actually have it in front of me. I am only too happy to have a look. If someone wants to pass me —

Ms R. Saffioti: So you walk in without your policy!

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is very good. I am actually responding to the motion moved by the member for Gosnells. I will continue.

Ms R. Saffioti: You walk in without your policy!

Mr A.P. JACOB: I walked in with your policy. It is clearly one that you had not read before!

Ms R. Saffioti: You don't have your own policy and you're in government!

Mr A.P. JACOB: Clearly we have somewhat wrong-footed the opposition. I look forward to hearing their conversation later. Madam Acting Speaker; I will just come back to the motion. The member opposite is doing what she does best!

The ACTING SPEAKER: That would be helpful.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The Swan River Trust will continue to work with other government agencies, local government authorities and community groups, as well as research institutions to improve water quality through the five-year \$40 million healthy rivers action plan, which members opposite have referenced. This action plan takes a catchment-to-coast approach to reducing nutrients and organic matter input into the system. It is also complemented by initiatives being implemented as part of the Swan–Canning water quality improvement plan released by the Liberal–National government in 2009. Together, these initiatives aim to prevent nutrients and organic matter entering our waterways through better land use planning. It will reduce nutrient sources through the development and implementation of local water quality improvement plans in priority catchments, reduce the conveyance and transmission of nutrients and other contaminants through better drainage management and intervention, and address the in-river effects of excessive nutrients and organic matter through intervention approaches, such as one of my favourites, which I have referenced many times in this place, oxygenation plants and the application of Phoslock.

Planning for two major nutrient stripping wetlands, particularly nutrient stripping in the Ellen and Bayswater Brooks, is well progressed by this government. It has provided \$3.2 million to allow the implementation of these important projects into 2014. The Ellen Brook and Bayswater wetlands projects are expected to remove about 0.32 and 1.35 tonnes of nitrogen and 0.27 and 0.2 tonnes of phosphorus respectively from the river system. These two areas combined currently account for 32.4 per cent of the nitrogen and 41.1 per cent of the phosphorus entering the Swan and Canning Rivers from the coastal catchments each year.

From 1 January 2011 the Liberal–National government introduced new fertiliser regulations to protect rivers. This limits the amount of phosphorus contained within home garden fertilisers. This move has effectively halved the concentration of phosphorus in domestic use fertilisers. In addition, soil amendment trials have commenced in the Southern River area. The trial involves the use of soil amendment products in urban areas to help reduce nutrient loads that may come in from domestic properties. It is important to note that there is often a lag time between on-ground projects occurring in the catchment and a measurable improvement in the estuary. The 2013 fish communities report provides evidence that these works are starting to flow through to produce positive impacts.

A query was made earlier about monitoring. It is important to note that nutrient monitoring is done weekly and the results of this estuary monitoring are publicly available in a variety of fit-for-purpose formats. The more rapidly processed data, such as salinity, dissolved oxygen and temperature, is available on the Swan River Trust website a few days after it is collected. That is in the form of our weekly water quality plots. I mentioned those before. I have not got one with me at the moment. One of the fantastic opportunities of oxygenation plotting is that we can really start to see the effects that these oxygenation plants are having, and the oxygen levels and saturation that flow from those. There was a lot of interest in the house when I held them up last time. I will go away and invest in an A3 colour printer for the next time I bring them in! The algal abundance and community composition data, including chlorophyll A, takes several days to process. However, that is also usually available within a week of being collected in our microalgal activity reports. Phosphorus, nitrogen, carbon, silicon and chlorophyll A samples need to be sent off to appropriately accredited laboratories. That can take some time to

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process. This data is available not only in quarterly progress reports but also in annual reports. It is compared with previous years' averages that report against the trust's long-term nutrient targets.

I will quickly address the issue of river walls and shoreline restoration, which was raised by a number of members. Investment in foreshore protection works is necessary to ensure that families and visitors can safely access valuable areas of public open space and also the facilities that exist along the length and breadth of our river. The government is working in partnership with local government to identify priority areas and also implementation works. This work will absolutely continue following the merger. In fact, I anticipate that this is one particular area in which we will see a very quick augmentation of the capacity within the larger agency. I certainly look forward to updating the house on what this merger will allow us to deliver in real immediate on-ground benefits for the river.

The Liberal–National government is also making a significant contribution to the protection and enhancement of shorelines within the Swan Canning Riverpark, and this work will absolutely continue. In fact, since coming to office in 2008, the Liberal–National government has invested over \$7.5 million in riverbank funding, distributed amongst 74 projects, including \$2.1 million on the replacement of several sections of failing wall along Mounts Bay Road. This investment has also seen a matched contribution from foreshore land managers, resulting in a total funding investment of more than \$15 million in the riverbank program. Funding will continue to be allocated each year on the basis of carefully assessed priorities.

The Liberal–National government has committed \$2.4 million to substantially upgrade the two existing oxygenation plants on the Canning River at Bacon Street and Camsell Way. New oxygenation equipment and technology will roll out on the Swan and Canning Rivers and it will give us a far better spread of oxygenation to areas further up the river. In line with that, we will also build a third new plant beyond the Kent Street Weir. The third plant will extend all the way to the Nicholson Road bridge, which is also on the Canning River. Closer to your electorate, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms L.L. Baker), there are two existing oxygenation plants on the Swan River at Guildford and Caversham. These plants help to oxygenate the water column.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They are actually closer to my area.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, absolutely, but I am addressing my comments to the Chair. I am trying to take the Chair's advice. It is much closer to the Chair's electorate than is the Kent Street Weir on the Canning River.

These plants help to oxygenate the water column and also to improve the dissolved oxygen levels of over 15 kilometres in linear length of the Swan and Canning river system. Monitoring of the oxygenation plants indicates that the influence of the plants is extensive and also provides refuge for aquatic organisms by improving oxygen levels within that water column. The model simulations have confirmed the benefits indicated by monitoring data and have allowed us to more accurately quantify these benefits. In fact, this modelling has recently indicated that the area of riverbed improved to accepted oxygen levels is between 0.6 and 1.2 square kilometres per day when all the plants are operational. This is expected to improve even further when the new plant on the Canning River, which will have the upgraded technology, is commissioned near the Nicholson Road bridge, hopefully early next year.

I would like to address some of the comments made by members opposite. I noted that a couple of them were keen for me to speak before they did. Unfortunately, I will probably not have a chance to address some of their queries or comments, but I will certainly take the opportunity to address some that have been raised to this point in the debate. There was a range of rhetorical flourishes about the downgrading of the importance of the river and this being an extremely dangerous move. I would say that this will elevate the importance of the river. Rather than an agency of 58 staff, we now have a dedicated conservation agency with well in excess of 1 600 staff and with far greater resources and expertise. We have all the resources and expertise that we had before, as well as an agency that is some 30 times the size.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: You don't get it, do you? There is a difference between conservation and catchment management.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Gosnells.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The question that was asked was: is a dedicated conservation agency the place to put a catchment management organisation? Yes is the answer to that question.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: How? Explain that.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have just spent 30 minutes going through some of that.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: No, you haven't.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will come back to that in a moment, because the member made a number of comments. Reference was made to some comments by Professor Poole, the chairman of the Swan River Trust. It was probably remiss of me; I should have said something at the start of my comments, and the member will probably agree with me on this point. I would like to pay tribute to Professor Poole. In my time as environment minister, I have found him to be an outstanding chairman of the Swan River Trust. It is certainly my hope that he will continue in that role for the foreseeable future through this transition to the new body. He has been an excellent chairman of the trust.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Do you acknowledge that the comments that I have quoted are totally at odds with what you are doing?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I think the member's position is totally at odds with his final policy platform, but that is an entirely different matter.

As I have said previously, the staff, and therefore the expertise, will also continue. I think it was a little unfair for the member for Gosnells to read from the Department of Parks and Wildlife strategic plan such as it currently stands, given that that document was published before the policy announcement was made. I certainly would not expect the Department of Parks and Wildlife to assume that the management of the Swan and Canning Rivers would come within —

Mr C.J. Tallentire: But it shows that those are the goals of a conservation agency that are separate from the catchment management ones.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Is this the only river in the state? It is obviously a very important river because it is right where we live. That importance will continue and the focus on it will absolutely continue.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: So, are you going to create a new division?

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is completely unfair to come into this place and read the strategic direction of an agency when the change has not even happened yet.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Those are the goals of the agency.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I would like to take the opportunity to address some of the member's specific queries. He asked specifically what I propose will be in the legislative changes. In the first instance, it is my intent that the changes will be very clean and clear-cut. At this stage, I intend that the changes that will be brought in will streamline this. Effectively, reference to the trust will be replaced in many places in the act with reference to the CEO of the new agency. It will be a fairly clean change. I note that the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act will be reviewed soon. I imagine that any discussions around any of those other issues that the member raised can be had through that review process, and I would rather keep those two generally separate. Given that the member has raised the point, I will give him a philosophical point of view that I hold in and around planning. I generally hold that when there is planning discretion on aesthetics or amenity, that discretionary decision-making role on aesthetic outcomes or amenity within what is clearly defined in a planning policy is generally best held with an elected member, be it a minister who is ultimately accountable to the electorate or —

Mr C.J. Tallentire: But that is not what we're talking about here. The planning decision-making role of the Swan River Trust is not about aesthetics, minister; it is about the environmental management of the Swan and Canning river system.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I have said, that is not intended to be part of the legislative changes.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: So, there will be no changes to part 5 of the act.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I do not have part 5 of the act in front of me now. As I said, there will be a range of changes —

Ms R. Saffioti: You can't tell us what they are now.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have not brought the legislation with me, have I? I expect there will be a range of changes. It is hypothetical at this stage, but I expect that they will mainly be to replace references to the trust board with references to the CEO. No doubt when that legislation comes in, we will spend a lot of time going through it clause by clause. There is a very open and transparent policy and process in this space.

Reference was made to the community environment grants program. This is certainly a highly dishonest motion, given that we are not abolishing the Swan River Trust.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: How is the motion dishonest?

Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr A.P. JACOB: We are not proposing to abolish the Swan River Trust, yet the motion condemns us for doing something that we are not actually doing.

Dr A.D. Buti: Then you debate it, but the motion is not dishonest.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is not true, is it? There is no proposal by the government to abolish the Swan River Trust, and the motion condemns us for doing something that we are not actually doing.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Minister, could you address your comments to me. I remind the member for Armadale that if he wants to go home early, tonight is the night to do it because he is on three calls.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The community environment grants program is a fantastic program. Going into the 2008 election, the Liberal Party specifically committed to creating a \$6 million fund, which was the community environment grants program. In fact, that amount was exceeded, and more than \$6 million was paid through the program. That program has been paid out—it has finished—and there are a range of other programs through which I would certainly encourage local environmental groups to pursue funding. It is interesting that members opposite —

Mr C.J. Tallentire: Name them. What are those programs?

Mr A.P. JACOB: There is Lotterywest, Coastwest funding and the State Natural Resource Management Office funding, which was mentioned previously. A range of local governments provide grants programs.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: The State NRM Office one is delayed.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is very interesting that the member jumped on it in this year's budget, but I thought I would go back and look at the budget papers, given that the election commitment in 2008 was clearly for a four-year program funded to \$6 million. What have previous budget papers shown? Was there any misleading? It was crystal clear that last year's budget showed that that was the final year of funding for that project. This was a policy that clearly laid out four years of funding at \$6 million. Last year was the last round of that funding, at approximately \$1.5 million. It was clearly funded in last year's budget and was not funded beyond that point. I went back through *Hansard* as well. No queries about it were made at that time. It was clearly in the 2012 budget, and the policy was there as well. The commitment was very clear all the way along. I do not for a second dispute that the work done under that policy was fantastic, and a range of other community programs will continue. However, a newly elected government does not go back and refund policy commitments from two elections ago. It is a very good news story for us: we met our commitment in full. We actually exceeded it. That is a big pat on the back for government. The money that was committed to —

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Member for Gosnells, we heard you in silence.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: No, you didn't.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, we did.

The ACTING SPEAKER: We heard the member for Gosnells in relative silence. I want to hear the minister. I am going to start calling you fairly soon because I am tired of your constant interruptions.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

As I have said, it was a 2008 election commitment that was met in full. It was entirely funded within that term of government to 2013. We are now in a new term of government. A range of key environmental policies were taken into this term of government, and they will be my focus as minister, particularly policies such as the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, and the new marine parks and projects that are funded through that program, the Parks for People program and other programs that have been well appropriated, I think, in this year's budget.

I will take just a moment to talk about another matter, not that it is one that particularly has anything to do with the motion before us. However, the member for Cannington segued into Elizabeth Quay. There was a fantastic moment for me during the campaign. It was my first time, if you like, of putting my hand up for re-election. I very well remember a front page of *The West Australian*. I have to say that that morning was the moment when I thought, "Do you know what? I think we've won this one." We saw quite clearly on that front page the Liberal-National government's vision for the Perth Waterfront project for Elizabeth Quay, and directly under that was the interesting photo of —

Ms E. Evangel interjected.

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Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr A.P. JACOB: Was that not a fantastic moment, member for Perth? The Alston comic followed it up relatively well also.

Ms E. Evangel interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, and we now have an absolutely fantastic member for Perth as a result of that. I love hearing the member for Cannington banging on about it, because it was one of the most defining moments, if not the most defining moment, of the 2013 election campaign.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Do you think it is a good idea?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Absolutely; it is a good idea, and it will generate revenue for government into the future. We will recoup a significant proportion of that investment in land sales. I saw the member's cute play with numbers to try to catch out the Minister for Planning, but I think the minister had it well over the member. We will recoup the value from land sales and, on top of that, there will be stamp duty on transactions well into the future. As well as that, there will be land tax receipts. A householder may make an investment in an investment property by purchasing a house and renting it out. It may be negatively geared for the first few years but property investments are generally longer term investments, and they more than recoup the initial outlay in the long term. This is certainly a project that will generate revenue for government well into the future, not to mention the activation of what this project will provide for the member for Perth in her local electorate.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Are you saying that the cost of Elizabeth Quay will be recovered in selling the 11 blocks?

Mr A.P. JACOB: No, that is not what I said.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Well, what are you saying?

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is very typical of the member for Cannington. He cannot help himself. He has to verbal.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! We are talking about the environmental health of the Swan and Canning Rivers. I think that talking about Elizabeth Quay is probably stretching it a bit. Minister, I ask you to return to the subject.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I was addressing comments that the member for Cannington made during his speech on the motion. It is very interesting; the member for Cannington accused me of verballing when I read out verbatim the Labor final platform—I cannot call it a policy. As I said, member, beyond that there will be significant recouping —

Mr W.J. Johnston: Stop telling lies and just answer the question.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I have said, member —

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Member for Cannington, you just accused the minister of telling lies. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. Johnston: So, minister, what are you saying? Will the \$440 million be fully recovered by the land sales—yes or no?

Mr A.P. JACOB: What I am saying is that not only will there be significant recouping of the costs from the land sales, but also it will be an income-generating asset for the state government into the future. It will generate employment on the site, obviously, and there will be stamp duty transactions on every transfer of any of those properties well into the future. As well as that, it will all result in land tax receipts well into the future. Just as a householder may make a decision to buy an investment property and effectively negatively gear it for the first few years, this is —

Mr W.J. Johnston: But you're not buying an investment property. You're buying the underground part of it. You do not understand the project; that is the problem, minister. You do not know what the project is about. Go and read the project documentation!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Mr A.P. JACOB: The member can yell me down as much as he wants, but he knows that I am right.

Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
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As I said, the most defining moment of that election—how did that go for the member in Cannington?—for me was when I thought, “Do you know what? I think we’ve won it.” It was a good few weeks before the election date when that front page of *The West Australian* showed our Elizabeth Quay and the very interesting plan that members opposite said they would support.

In closing, and bringing my comments back to the motion before us, I think I have outlined some of the significant investments that this government has already made in protecting the environmental health of the Swan and Canning Rivers. Certainly, I believe that capacity will only be augmented in the future with this very important machinery-of-government change. Members opposite may have changed their minds since, but I think it is fair to say that in 2011 they were certainly leaning in the same direction. I encourage them to support the legislation when it comes into this place. Either way, whether or not they want to own a piece of it, it is certainly going to be a very good initiative for the management of our Swan Canning Riverpark, effectively producing an agency of some 30 times the size that can specialise in work in and around that area. It will have far larger budgets and a far larger capacity. It will take all of the existing expertise, knowledge, staff and budgets and bulk them into an even greater range of expertise and knowledge from other rivers and other riparian systems in and around the state. That can only help in the future management of the Swan Canning Riverpark.

The second part of this motion is simply not true. There is no proposal to abolish the Swan River Trust. The trust will remain. The trust has been a fantastic vesting and advisory body, and it will continue to be a vesting and advisory body.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: But it won’t have any staff reporting directly to it.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said at the beginning of my speech, member for Gosnells, the trust is not an employing authority. People are employed under the Department of Parks and Wildlife anyway, which probably again shows how small a change to this is.

Mr C.J. Tallentire interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Gosnells!

Mr A.P. JACOB: There will be consequential amendments to the act. There was an announcement in this place, obviously, to foreshadow those, and they are yet to come. But I certainly encourage members of this place to support this legislation. There will be some very good opportunities in and amongst this for the Swan and Canning Rivers. I understand that opposition is opposition. I suspect that members opposite maybe even recognise that as well and probably just cannot say so. I do not commend the motion to the house and I will not be supporting it.

Tabling of Document

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [6.20 pm]: The minister agreed to table a document, so I ask him to table that document now. I want to go through some of the points the minister has raised. Has the minister tabled that document?

Mr A.P. Jacob: I am finding it.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the member for Forrestfield know what I got off the website? A copy of the Liberal Party’s policy, and I will go through what it says in a minute when the minister tables his document. The Minister for Environment came into the house to debate a motion on the Swan River Trust and failed to bring in his party’s policy. The government tells the opposition all the time that it won the election, so what does the minister bring into the house? He brings in a document which he said —

Mr A.P. Jacob: I have got it right here.

[See paper 1067.]

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister said that he did not have it, so he has misled the Parliament how many times today? I cannot keep track of how many times one minister can mislead the Parliament in 40 minutes! He comes in and says that we made a 2013 election policy. He read the document.

A member interjected.

Point of Order

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 16 October 2013]

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Mr N.W. MORTON: The member for Mandurah seems to think it is okay to interject when he is not sitting in his place. Would Mr Acting Speaker instruct the member for Mandurah to refrain from objecting or return to his seat?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There was not a single person in the chamber who heard the member for Mandurah interject on anybody.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): I did hear the member for Mandurah call someone a shooting star. I take the member for Forrestfield's point of order and advise the member for Mandurah that if he wants to interject, he should go back to his seat.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister comes in with the 2011 policy platform. He intentionally misled the house because he knew what it was. He later said, "This is the 2013 election policy." It was only when the opposition challenged him to table it that he started to read it properly and thought, "Oh, yeah, I might table it", and he forgot to table it.

Mr A.P. Jacob: I forgot to table it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The minister has had his chance. He failed to address the key issues raised in a motion raised by a very smart opposition spokesperson for the environment, who has years of experience in this portfolio, who actually asked key questions that the minister failed to answer. The minister brought in a list of everything that is done in an annual report and read it all out. He said that the Swan River Trust is not going to be abolished, yet said that the Swan River Trust will no longer exist.

The Swan River Trust has an annual report. It reports against its staff. It has statements. Is the minister saying that will continue? Does he say that in 2013 or 2014, whenever the government brings in this legislation, it will continue to produce a Swan River Trust annual report, which shows the trust, the number of employees and the financial statements? Will that happen? No; the Swan River Trust is going to be abolished. It is going to be abolished not through a merger with the department but by a takeover. For the minister to come in here, after he came in with a ministerial statement that said there will no longer be a Swan River Trust as it is going to be merged into another department and say, "Oh, we are not abolishing the Swan River Trust", is not possible. When I search for the Swan River Trust on the internet, I find on the website a department, the number of employees, the income statement and the balance sheet. That is a department. Will that continue? No, because the Swan River Trust is going to be abolished under this government.

I now come to the key issue. The minister is so obsessed with policies and election commitments that he said that the government did not ever clearly commit to keeping the Swan River Trust open. That is what he said. I refer to media statements and election commitments. I am surprised that the minister has walked out of the chamber. If the minister does not have them, he should have read them before he came in, and before he got his junior researchers to find a 2011 policy platform for the Labor Party, to try to mislead the house and say these were the exact election policies the Liberal Party brought to the 2013 election. He should have studied his party's policies.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Where's he gone?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He is gone. I refer to his own policies. Again and again, this government breaks promises daily and its members do it with smiles on their faces. There are no apologies. They are just laughing: "No one cared about policies! We were just good blokes, that is why they voted us in. No one cares about policies." Again and again, the government is breaking its election policies. The minister's Pollyanna view of the world cannot be sustained.

I now go to the policy and the media statement. The Liberal Party's policy statement states —

A re-elected Liberal Government will work in partnership with the Western Australian Planning Commission, local governments, Tourism Council, the Swan River Trust ...

The government committed to work with an agency that it was going to abolish. If it was going to abolish it, why would it put it in its policy?

Mr J.E. McGrath: Because it had not been decided then.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It had not been decided! A lot of things were not decided until after the election. Perhaps when the government makes those decisions after the election it should look at the policies it took to the election. The Liberal Party is making decisions every day as if the election did not matter, as if the policies it took did not matter. If it was such a good idea to abolish the Swan River Trust, why not tell everybody? If this Pollyanna, fantastic view of the world that there would be no Swan River Trust but everything will be better, the swans will be singing louder and the dolphins will be jumping higher is true, why did the Liberal Party not tell the people at

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the election? It did not. It is appalling that the minister walks out on this key point. The government's policy talks about the existence of a Swan River Trust. It does not say that the Swan River Trust is going to be abolished, merged or whatever other weasel words it tries to use now. I read through the policy again. Page 14 of the Liberal Party election policy states —

A re-elected Liberal Government will work in partnership with the Western Australian Planning Commission, local governments, Tourism Council, Swan River Trust ...

The government committed to keep the Swan River Trust. That is what it did. It made a commitment and has again broken it.

I refer to a Liberal Party media statement, which states —

An investment of \$7million over four years will assist the Swan River Trust ...

It does not say the agency formerly known as the Swan River Trust or some other agency.

Mr D.A. Templeman: The trust that dare not speak its name.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Or the ex-trust. That statement actually talks about the Swan River Trust. It is absolutely misleading to come in here and say that the Liberal Party did not commit to keep the Swan River Trust in future years when its policy and media statement refer to it. Stand up and say that the Liberal Party did not tell the people it was planning to close—abolish—the Swan River Trust. Do not come in here and pretend that it never made that commitment. As I said, if it was such a good idea, just like breaking election commitments on rail lines, on not building police stations or forced amalgamations—I cannot remember how many examples there are; I do not know how many elections promises the government has broken—tell the people at the election.

The shadow Minister for Environment raised some serious issues. I will go through some of them, and he will go through some of them too, but the Minister for Environment failed to address them. He referred to an annual report, which will no longer exist because the Swan River Trust is going to be abolished, and he went through pretty much the debate in point form. He spent 30 minutes doing that. I congratulate his ability to read for 30 minutes in point form the points made in an annual report. But the minister did not address some of the key issues the shadow minister raised. He did not think about what the shadow minister had raised, he did not process it and he was unable to provide coherent answers. It was just a list of this and that, we did this and we got nothing here. The opposition could have got that information from media statements and annual reports.

I just want to go through some of the planning issues in respect of my shadow portfolio. I heard the Minister for Environment's response, but I have no idea what he is doing. I read a section of the Swan River Trust's website, which states —

The amendments to the legislation are still to be determined. If the amendments give rise to changes to the existing planning and development control procedures, the Trust's partners and stakeholders will be kept informed. In the meantime, existing arrangements and procedures will continue to be implemented.

The minister has no idea; in light of the answer he gave today, he has no idea about what is going to happen to the land currently governed by the Swan River Trust in respect of planning and development. He has no idea. He talks about aesthetics and amenity; who is going to actually be responsible for it? Will it be the Department of Environment and Conservation, will it be local councils, or will it be the Western Australian Planning Commission? Who is it going to be? The minister is giving absolutely no response to what is a fundamental part of this change. One of the key things the trust does is look after planning and development approvals around that area. The minister said that he did not know and to wait for the legislation; that is what he said. He has no idea. He made a beautiful ministerial statement saying that everything was going to be great, but we still have no idea. He had an hour to provide some insight into what was going to happen, and he failed to do so.

I still do not understand why he is doing this. Why is he doing this? This is a beautiful natural asset. It is an icon of the metropolitan and surrounding areas. It has a dedicated agency, which means that the state believes that it is so important that it warrants a dedicated agency whose entire role and responsibility is the care and protection of that icon. That is what it means, but the minister is saying that it is not that important. As I said, I do not understand the reasoning behind this. The minister said that there would be economies of scale, so there are savings, but then he said that it was cost neutral. I have no idea of the reasoning behind this and I have no idea whose idea it was. Was it the minister's idea? We would like to hear the history of whose idea it was. Who brought it to the cabinet table? Was the minister told that after the election the government was going to abolish the Swan River Trust? Whose idea was it? We have already seen massive cuts to grant programs within the department; what is going to happen to the Swan River Trust grant programs, which will be moved under this authority? What is going to happen? As the member for Cannington pointed out, the minister cut some awards, on World Environment Day, after he had already invited people to apply for them. First of all he says, "Please

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apply for these environmental awards; I want to recognise your outstanding achievements,” and then, a few weeks later says, “Oh well, sorry about the outstanding achievement; I no longer want to recognise it,” and he cuts the awards. We have seen massive cuts to grants. So what will happen to all these grants in the Swan River Trust? There has been absolutely no response and no real answers to the questions asked by the shadow Minister for Environment, the member for Gosnells.

This is clearly another broken promise, yet when the minister marched in here today, he thought he had us. What page was it of the policy platform? He thought he had us; he was smiling away.

Mr A.P. Jacob: Still smiling!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, he smiles because he has no idea about the reality. Like I said, he has a Pollyanna view of the world; he has no idea and no concept of guilt or fault. Good luck to him, as my uncle would say. If he has no understanding of when he is wrong, he can keep smiling. I wish I were like that; I wish I had no understanding of when I was wrong or had guilt, but many members opposite seem to carry it pretty well, so good luck to them. You can't argue with an idiot.

He came in here and pretended that he had us. He failed to come into this place and say that his policy talked about the Swan River Trust. He failed to do that. He failed to address the key issues raised by the member for Gosnells, including the issue of what is going to happen in respect of planning powers. He did not address any of those key things, and as I said, we still do not really know whose decision it was and why it is happening. The minister maintains that the Swan River Trust will continue to exist; it will not. There will not be another annual report, because of the timing of the legislation. There will be an advisory board; fair enough, but the government is abolishing the trust. The minister should not try to pretend that he is doing both things.

I would like to talk about Elizabeth Quay for a second. The government can talk about it all it likes, but to come in here and say that it is a revenue raiser—honestly! If that is the case, let us build them everywhere, because it might solve our credit rating. If the Elizabeth Quay project raises revenue for the state, let us build 10 of them and try to get our AAA credit rating back.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I want three in Mandurah.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Mandurah wants three in Mandurah! Do we have any more? These things actually make money! Who would have thought?

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not listening to the member for Forrestfield, because I find his interjections appalling!

If these things make money, let us have more of them! Last time I looked at the budget papers —

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. Johnston: She's mocking you, you stupid person!

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.C. Blayney): Member for Cannington, I ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I know that these guys do not like to look at the budget papers too much; they are working draft documents that are presented by the Treasurer that the government maybe uses to hold doors open, but I do not think government members read them. Last time I looked at the budget papers, the cost of Elizabeth Quay was about \$440 million dollars. Western Power had to fund a cost for transmission works. There were also costs for Water Corporation and the road program. So last time I looked, Elizabeth Quay was not a revenue raiser. If the government thinks that it can bring in land tax and stamp duty calculations, which the Minister for Planning interjected about and the Minister for Environment took up, it is never done. In all my time at Treasury, agencies tried to do that; they said, “This will make money because we're going to sell some land”. If that were the case, seriously, the government would fund anything, because it is just so ridiculous. It is not used in any proper analysis of projects. It is not used, and Treasury has never used it. I remember, because people tried using it all the time, and every time, people said, “Don't use that”. I know that the Minister for Planning interjected, “How about land tax and stamp duty?” and the Minister for Environment just copied that, but he does not use it in his analysis. Like I said, last time I looked at the budget papers, it was actually a cost. Do not tell anyone! It is not a

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revenue raiser, because if it were, we should build 10 of them! Let us get our AAA rating back with 10 Elizabeth Quays, if that is what the Minister for Environment believes to be the case.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [6.38 pm] — in reply: Mr Acting Speaker, rising —

Point of Order

Mr A.P. JACOB: The member for Gosnells —

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Acting Speaker, I distinctly heard you give the call. The member for Gosnells had actually uttered a couple of words when the minister raised a point of order. There is no point of order. You gave the call to the member for Gosnells. As for any deals behind the Chair, we made it quite clear to the government at the start of this process that we would like to bring this to a vote tonight. I actually asked if we could bring it to a vote around 6.00 pm. The minister spoke for quite a long time. The member for Gosnells needs to have his right of reply before this debate can be concluded and put to a vote. The chief point of my point of order is that you had actually given the call to the member for Gosnells and he had started speaking, so there was no point of order by the minister.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Mr Acting Speaker, I take the opportunity, whatever your ruling, to place on the record that there was actually an agreement with the member for Midland and it was that four of our members could speak. She is clearly renegeing on that now and trying to turn it around to a positive, but that was the case. The member for Midland knows that, and it is very disappointing.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Further to that point of order, from this side of the chamber I did hear the member for Belmont seek the call. I think we should call on the match review committee!

The ACTING SPEAKER: In my mind, quite clearly I had given the call to the member for Gosnells, and I have to apologise to the member for Belmont, because I did not hear her or see her. In that case, I have to ask the member for Gosnells to carry on.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I rise to close this debate. Indeed, we want to get to the vote, because those members opposite whose electorates adjoin the Swan and Canning river system need to show where they stand on this issue.

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: But I did not get to talk. It is unfair. I did not get to talk.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The member for Belmont will get to vote, and she will be accountable to her electorate based on her voting. I would welcome the member for Belmont voting with us.

The fact is that the minister's position on this matter has been full of holes. The minister began by saying that the Swan River Trust could be a bit like the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, with a position within the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Who in this place has heard of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority beyond its role in this place? It is a very low-profile organisation. It is an authority that does not have a public profile. That is very different from the Swan River Trust, which has a high public profile and is tasked with educating the community about all those catchment management issues that the minister did not go to in his speech. Catchment management is the role of the Swan River Trust. The minister also did not respond to my point that Western Australia is unique in the commonwealth in that it is the only state that does not have a catchment management authority.

It is clear that this minister does not understand the details of this issue. The minister is confused about this issue. He thinks that the conservation commitment and the ethic and ethos within the Department of Parks and Wildlife will be sufficient to look after the Swan and Canning river system. The minister does not get it. The minister does not understand the fundamental point that because there is so much human activity, so much urban development, so much business and enterprise activity, and light industry, and so much agricultural and horticultural activity in the Swan–Canning River catchment, a whole host of things go beyond the scope of those conservation professionals who work in the Department of Parks and Wildlife. That is what the minister has failed to grasp and failed to incorporate into his thinking on this issue.

I do not know where this idea came from. I think it came from some people who were drafting the Liberal Party election policy. But there was some clear division there as well, because, as the member for West Swan pointed out, the Liberal Party policy was about the ongoing role of the Swan River Trust. That is clearly documented in the Liberal Party election policy. The minister thinks that he can find a little ray of sunshine in the Labor Party's final platform from 2011. The minister needs to learn how the Labor Party works. The Labor Party has a very open and transparent policy development process. It is also a very rigorous and extended process, in which the

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
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lay party is involved. However, when it comes to the making of final election policy commitments, there is another set of policies. Therefore, the minister was not able to source those commitments that we had made going into the 2013 election. The minister has failed to understand that.

The minister suggested that I was unfair in looking at the strategic directions document that he released with the Department of Parks and Wildlife. He said I was unfair because when this document was put out, which was, I think, on about 1 July this year, it was not known that the Swan River Trust would be abolished. However, in the next breath, the minister said that it was an election promise of the Liberal Party elsewhere in this document that the Swan River Trust would be abolished, because there is talk about the river plan being merged into the conservation agency. There is no consistency in what this minister says—none at all.

We clearly have a problem here. The Minister for Environment does not understand the role of catchment management. He does not understand that it is about working with businesses that may in some way be emitters of phosphorous. He does not understand that it is about working with organisations such as Main Roads so that when it builds or upgrades a road, sediments or other things are not released into the river system. He does not understand that it is about creating things such as living streams that can provide nutrient filters. That is not the standard role of a conservation agency, minister. A parks and wildlife authority looks after a unique area that is in need of conservation. When we are talking about catchment management, we are dealing with a very complex process that is about the interaction of, yes, a natural asset—the Swan and Canning river system—with the built environment that is around it. That is a very complex process. That is why we need a dedicated agency to fulfil that task.

There was discussion by the minister about the budgetary arrangements and some suggestion that this is just a minor tweaking or a minor change. But the minister was not able to guarantee that in the service summary in the next budget we will see a separate allocation for the activities that were formerly undertaken by the Swan River Trust and a separate allocation for the activities that are undertaken by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. I do not think the minister knows what the situation will be. I do not think the minister knows whether there will be a separation of those services. That is because the minister is always talking about the need for the Swan River Trust to be merged. The minister gave the crazy example of a landscape architect and how that person would get some synergistic benefit from their role in the Department of Parks and Wildlife. If the minister is basing his whole decision-making about the future of the Swan River Trust on the career path of a landscape architect, I think he has got it wrong. The minister needs to base his decision-making on something much more comprehensive. The minister needs to understand what it is to be a catchment manager. We need to be augmenting the role of the Swan River Trust, not downplaying it.

The minister has failed to convince anyone on this side of the house. The minister went to the election and pretended that he would not get rid of the Swan River Trust, yet in his own policy documents he refers to the Swan River Trust working with other agencies. That is an amazing inconsistency. I do not understand why the minister is doing this. The minister has not explained whether he will save money by doing this, and nor has he explained what the agenda is. The minister tried to allay our concerns by saying that this is not about some crazy idea about removing green tape and getting rid of the planning approvals function of the Swan River Trust. But that remains to be seen. The minister has not done the job when trying to convince anyone here of the benefits of this decision. On the contrary, the minister has only added to the weight of public opinion that sees this as a bad decision. In many ways, this is also a broken promise, because although the minister can say that this was indicated in his election policy, it was in a very veiled manner when we compare it with other parts of the Liberal Party's election policies that talk about the Swan River Trust being an agency that will continue to exist. The minister has failed to understand his role as a Minister for Environment who understands what catchment management is all about. That is the greatest fault that the minister has committed tonight.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr I.C. Blayney) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

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Mr Chris Tallentire; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker;
Mr Dean Nalder; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr John McGrath

Ayes (17)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J. Farrer
Mr W.J. Johnston

Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr M.P. Murray
Ms M.M. Quirk

Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson

Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (32)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr V.A. Catania
Mr M.J. Cowper
Ms M.J. Davies

Mr J.H.D. Day
Ms W.M. Duncan
Ms E. Evangel
Mr J.M. Francis
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mrs L.M. Harvey

Mr C.D. Hatton
Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr R.S. Love
Mr J.E. McGrath
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell

Mr N.W. Morton
Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr J. Norberger
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr P. Papalia
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr J.R. Quigley

Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr R.F. Johnson

Question thus negatived.