

## PLAN FOR OUR PARKS

*Statement by Minister for Environment*

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment)** [12.16 pm]: Today, I would like to inform and update the house on the government's Plan for Our Parks initiative. In 2019, the government announced the Plan for Our Parks initiative, which seeks to create five million hectares of new national parks, marine parks and other conservation reserves over five years. This is the single biggest increase in the conservation estate in our state's history, and substantial progress has already been made. Plan for Our Parks will provide more opportunities for nature-based tourism and the conservation of the state's biodiversity by protecting habitat for threatened flora and fauna. Twenty-eight reserve proposals have been identified, 11 of which have been fully or partially completed. More than 1.1 million hectares of new conservation reserves have already been created. Five marine parks are also being created under this initiative.

On 31 July, I announced the creation of three marine parks in the Buccaneer Archipelago, the Lalang-gaddam Marine Park, Bardi Jawi Gaarra Marine Park, and Mayala Marine Park. The marine parks and joint management plans were co-designed with traditional owners. Planning and consultation for a marine park on the south coast and for the extension of the Marmion Marine Park are underway. Community reference committees for these planning processes have already met to provide advice on the development of the indicative management plans, which are due for release for statutory public consultation in 2023. Advice from the community reference committees and established sector advisory groups will ensure that planning for the marine park is well informed, with a balanced approach to sustainable use of the area and protection of its values.

Most of the Plan for Our Parks reserves will be jointly vested in and managed by traditional owners and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. This will have a range of cross-sectoral benefits, with positive impacts upon the health, education, justice, housing, social inclusion, culture and language, and economic development for Aboriginal people. The McGowan government seeks to increase employment pathways for Aboriginal people in these areas to improve social, health and educational outcomes. By providing real and meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal people and the community to build their capacity, strengthen governance and be trained and employed to directly participate in the management of their country, the initiative will help address our shared accountabilities under Closing the Gap and objectives under the Aboriginal empowerment strategy. I am pleased to update the house on this groundbreaking initiative for conservation in Western Australia, which provides a strong basis for an enduring relationship between government and Aboriginal people.