

**RETURN TO 1616: DIRK HARTOG ISLAND NATIONAL PARK
ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECT**

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [12.33 pm]: Today I would like to update the house on progress of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' Return to 1616: Dirk Hartog Island National Park ecological restoration project. On 24 June, I had the privilege of assisting with the release of 100 brush-tailed mulgara as part of this ambitious project. I would like to acknowledge the Malgana people, who are the traditional owners of Wirruwana in Gathaagudu, Dirk Hartog Island, in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. Malgana elders attended the mulgara release, providing an example of the strengthening relationship between the Malgana people and DBCA. This relationship is now seeing the Malgana Aboriginal Corporation and DBCA working together to develop an Indigenous land use agreement as a step towards joint management of the national park. The mulgara were sourced from another part of Western Australia's conservation estate that is jointly managed by DBCA with the Martu people, the Matuwa Kurrara National Park north east of Wiluna. Five Martu rangers from the Tarlka Matuwa Piarku Aboriginal Corporation accompanied the mulgara on their 800-kilometre journey to Dirk Hartog Island National Park.

The Return to 1616 project aims to restore WA's largest island to a similar ecological condition as it was found by Dutch sea captain Dirk Hartog when he became the first European to visit Western Australia on 25 October 1616. The first stage of ecological restoration was completed in 2018 with the eradication of feral cats, sheep and goats. This eradication makes Dirk Hartog the largest island in the world on which this remarkable feat has been achieved, something Western Australians can be very proud of. In the absence of sheep and goats and with targeted weed control, there has been significant improvement in vegetation and habitat condition, allowing for native fauna reintroduction. Eight native animal species have been reintroduced so far, including 112 rufous hare-wallabies, 102 banded hare-wallabies, 99 Shark Bay bandicoots, 135 dibblers, 130 Shark Bay mice, 122 greater stick-nest rats and during the last year, 85 western grasswrens and the 100 brush-tailed mulgara that were released in June. Early results from innovative scientific monitoring show that all these translocated species are doing well on their new island home. At least five of these species are now breeding on the island and Shark Bay bandicoots now roam across the whole island following their reintroduction just a few short years ago. I acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the DBCA staff involved in this remarkable conservation process. Thank you very much.