

SOUTH COAST MARINE PARK — CONSULTATION

134. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the proposed south coast marine park and the McGowan government's refusal to release critical information, such as the socio-economic impact assessment, during the public consultation process. Does the community not deserve complete transparency on the details underpinning this proposal, given that two years ago the government claimed that this project hinged on genuine engagement?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

Thank you for the question, member. I want to remark that this is the first question from the opposition to the environment minister in well over a year, so thank you for finally recognising the environment. It is yet to be revealed how long before members opposite discover climate change and ask me a question on that issue as well!

We conduct a thorough and very inclusive process whenever we look at expanding or introducing national parks or marine parks. There is a process underway. It is a process that has occurred before in Western Australia. There is consultation with all community groups through the community reference committee. There is consultation with industry bodies. In fact, I know that Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions officials have been reaching out to commercial fishers and recreational fishers. Commercial fishers obviously have an interest in terms of their livelihood. We appreciate the significance of that and we want to work with those companies. We have sought one-on-one meetings. As a government, we have gone out of our way through the DBCA to have one-on-one meetings. In fact, having that information from the fishing companies and professional fishers helps inform the shape of the sanctuary areas and the areas that we need to keep open for the extraction of fishing. It is a very consultative process. It is a very open process. I think, Minister for Fisheries, there is a meeting coming up very soon. In terms of the next step, indicative maps have been provided. That is a process that is now happening.

To suggest that somehow there is a secretiveness or a lack of inclusivity in the process is just a ridiculous assumption. This government goes out of its way to consult and include all sectors of the community, including environmental interests and members of the public. It is an established process that has been very successful. We believe we are achieving a wonderful thing. The creation of this new marine park will see well over a million hectares of the marine environment protected for future Western Australians. It will also mean that areas will be available for recreational fishing and commercial fishing. Importantly, there will be areas that traditional owners will be able to practise cultural activities on. This is crucial. It is all about including the community together and getting the right result. Member, this is significant. This is going to be around for the future. It is transformational. It is a good thing to do. I would like to see the opposition support our efforts in what is an inclusive process.