

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT — IMPLEMENTATION

**405. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:**

I refer to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and the Premier's comments in question time last week that the opposition was dog whistling to those stakeholders and industry groups —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** — that have raised reasonable concerns about the implementation of the act. Given representatives from the Aboriginal community, property sector, agriculture sector and mining sector have all publicly raised their concerns about the regulations and readiness of government and stakeholders for the 1 July start date, does the Premier now concede that the opposition is accurately reflecting the concerns of the community?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please.

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I will allow the opposition to reflect on its own motives in relation to its questions; that is not necessarily for me to do. Obviously, people have made observations in relation to that. We are working collaboratively in partnership with all industry groups, including members of the community at large, to make sure that we continue to answer any questions and ensure that these laws are implemented as smoothly as possible. We have had community forums in Merredin, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Esperance—right around the state—to ensure that we can answer everyone's questions. The feedback I get from a lot of people at these forums is that they get to the end and go, "Oh; was that it? There's nothing to be worried about then really, is there?" No, there is not. One person's concern was: "I'm anxious that I haven't been doing enough previously under the old Aboriginal Heritage Act and maybe I had undertaken tasks potentially outside the bounds of that act as well." I think people are bringing the right attitude to this debate. We will continue to work with them. Obviously, any new laws raise questions in people's minds about the way it is implemented. Any new laws potentially raise some anxieties about questions that people might have, which is why we are here to answer their questions—and will continue to do so.

As to the member's motivations for inciting some of the tone in relation to this matter, I will leave it up to the member to examine his own conscience.