

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY — CHAIR

**124. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the government media statement giving thanks to outgoing Environmental Protection Authority chair Matthew Tonts and announcing that deputy chair Lee McIntosh will take over as acting chair of the EPA.

- (1) Given the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia Green Web report highlights that regulatory regimes, particularly with regard to environmental approvals, are taking far too long and application of the rules is increasingly unpredictable, why has the government appointed a former activist from the Environmental Defender's Office to oversee approvals?
- (2) As Ms McIntosh is part of the current problem of ever-changing guidelines, shifting goalposts and ongoing and unrealistic regulatory creep in assessing green environmental and cultural heritage requirements, why has the government made this appointment when more suitable candidates are available who would be more balanced in their opinions?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am just contemplating some of the nature of that question, but I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment to see whether he has an answer.

**Hon DARREN WEST replied:**

Thank you, President. I think I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment I provide the following answer.

- (1) As per the Environmental Protection Act 1986, the deputy chair performs the functions of the chair in the event the chair is unavailable. Ms McIntosh has been the deputy chair of the EPA since 2020 and has more than two decades experience practicing as an environmental lawyer. She brings a broad range of experience and knowledge on environmental due diligence issues, heritage, offsets, and assessment and approvals processes.
- (2) The assertion behind the member's question is misleading. If the member wishes to understand the basis of the government's critical work to overhaul the environmental approvals framework, I invite him to seek a briefing from the Minister for Environment's office.