



THE HON PETER GARRETT AM MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

TRANSCRIPT

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
FREMANTLE PRISON
FREMANTLE, WA**

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SUBJECTS: \$5.5 million for heritage projects in WA under the *Jobs Fund*; NT proposal for crocodile safaris; oil spill; *Beds are Burning*

GARRETT: It's terrific to come back to Fremantle Prison for the second time for this announcement on the second round of the Government's *Jobs Fund* heritage projects, to provide significant commitment not only to work that can be done here in the Fremantle Prison, but also to a number of other projects in Western Australia – some of which have particular importance in terms of their World Heritage values.

And just to reemphasise, the purpose of these funds is to enable local employment and local businesses to take every opportunity to do work straight away on improving, renovating, and restoring heritage sites right around the country - heritage sites which actually contribute not only to our understanding of our history and our culture but also to regional and local economies.

So, I'm absolutely thrilled to see how good this Prison is looking - it's a very important tourism destination in Western Australia, it's very important in us understanding our convict past. I think it's a good thing that we are able provide additional support here for the work that will be undertaken. I'm looking forward to seeing it if I come back again, I hope I can.

JOURNALIST: Minister on another issue, crocodile shooting in the NT. What was the rationale behind your decision not to allow that?

GARRETT: My strong view was that safari hunting for crocodiles is not an effective management tool to deal with issues around the management of crocodile populations.

I've allowed for an increase in the number of eggs that can be harvested and there will be the opportunity to revisit that particular number next year as well.

But for the moment I think that this is the right decision. It means that we have more eggs harvested, economic opportunities for those Indigenous communities that are involved in egg harvesting. But at the same time we won't have safari hunting of crocodiles in the NT because I don't think it's an effective management tool in the management plan.

JOURNALIST: Do you agree with the Northern Territory though, that something has to be done to reduce the crocodile numbers?

GARRETT: Well the important thing about my decision today is that I've increased the number of eggs that can be harvested and we have additional measures to ensure that there is appropriate removal of crocodiles from urban and suburban areas. And I think that we've just got to keep monitoring very closely, crocodile numbers.

The effect of this plan will be to provide a sustainable basis for not only the harvesting of eggs but for crocodile populations in the long term. We'll monitor, if in the next year if we think there's sufficient reason to increase the number of eggs that can be harvested then this plan allows for an increase in the harvesting of eggs.

JOURNALIST: It's quite unusual though isn't it for the Federal Government to overrule a Territory government on something?

GARRETT: Well I think that this decision is consistent with decisions that have been taken in the past by the Commonwealth on crocodile hunting as an activity under the management plan, within the national environment legislation.

The fact is that crocodiles are not feral species, they are species that are identified under the national environment legislation in the event that there are going to be exports. The Commonwealth clearly has a national role to play. I've exercised that role today.

JOURNALIST: Minister, what backlash are you expecting from the Northern Territory Government and Indigenous groups?

GARRETT: I've had an opportunity to talk to Carl Hampton this morning from the NT Government. I don't anticipate that there will be a backlash. I think we have to recognise that safari hunting, as was identified in a draft plan, was of a very limited nature to the extent that it wasn't going to deal with the question of the sustainability and management of crocodile populations. My decision is consistent with that judgement.

I think people will recognise that there are significant economic opportunities for Indigenous communities working with private entities to have a much greater number of capture of eggs. And as well recognise that the tourism

image of the Northern Territory and the attraction that the Northern Territory has as a tourist destination is on the basis that native wildlife is able to coexist in the natural environment and provide opportunities for tourism and tourists to come and view.

JOURNALIST: Are you willing to negotiate to find a better proposal for safari hunting of crocs or do you think that proposal is more or less dead in the water?

GARRETT: My decision today is a final decision. I'm very sure it's the right decision and I'm absolutely confident that by increasing the harvest of eggs we'll be able to manage the issue of crocodile populations in a proper and in a prudent way.

JOURNALIST: Just on the oil slick in the Timor Sea, the WWF is consistently saying that not enough is being done. They've just returned from capturing vision out there and they say there's lots of wildlife that's affected. Is the Government going enough on that?

GARRETT: I've said repeatedly that we are absolutely focused on this serious issue of an oil spill in the north-west, that the daily monitoring aerial surveys, the treatments of dispersant continues, that the claims that have been made in the past about impacts on wildlife haven't been shown to be validated. We are very concerned though about that which is why we have biologists and wildlife specialists onsite at the moment.

There has been no impact that I'm aware of, and I'm advised that there has been no impact on cetaceans at this point in time. We can be thankful for that. We have a long-term monitoring plan in place and it's been in place for some time, contrary to media reports yesterday. We also have the establishment of a wildlife refuge sanctuary at Broome.

There is close coordination between the Commonwealth, the West Australian Government and relevant authorities on this issue. I very much hope that the satisfactory conclusion of the plugging exercise can come into play hopefully not too far down the track.

But we are absolutely focussed. We have a plan in action, we have long-term monitoring, we have experts on the scene and up to this point in time, thankfully, we are not seeing significant impacts on wildlife.

JOURNALIST: Indonesian authorities have said they are concerned that the slick is now moving towards their coast. What's the communication been like with your government and with Indonesian authorities, and how far has it moved?

GARRETT: The slick's moved relatively slowly and I think again, I've made comment in the past that the weather conditions have been reasonably benign in the north-west.

Of course we will have appropriate communications with relevant authorities in Indonesia about the management of that slick. My expectation is that AMSA and the company involved and those officers who are involved at the moment, not only in the surveillance but also in the treatment of the slick, will continue to do that work, and they'll work closely with Indonesian authorities should that be required.

JOURNALIST: Mr Garrett I've got one more question, it's about the cover of your Midnight Oil *Beds are Burning* song, what's your response to the cover of the song?

GARRETT: Look, I think it's fantastic that musicians and people like Kofi Annan and Desmond Tutu wanted to work with an Oils song. We gave them the opportunity to have some different lyrics which are really relevant to what this particular campaign that the song is attached to is about: that's Copenhagen and that's climate change. A couple of listens and its starts to grow on you. I think they've done a good job.

JOURNALIST: Do you think that it's going to get much needed public momentum to get some sort of outcome out of Copenhagen in December?

GARRETT: Well I think that music has a role to play, as do politicians, as does the community. It will be part of the mix and I hope it will be a good part.

JOURNALIST: Will you be getting any royalties?

GARRETT: No we won't be receiving any income from this, and neither should we. We're absolutely delighted to be able to gift the song. And I think that the campaign will provide an opportunity for other organisations who work in that field.

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