

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 8 June 2011, Page 3064

ARKAROOLA WILDERNESS SANCTUARY

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (16:55):

I also rise to support the motion of the Hon. Mark Parnell in relation to mining in the Arkaroola sanctuary and providing protection for that sanctuary. First of all, I wish to congratulate the Hon. Mark Parnell on raising the issue of protecting this unique and precious area and for his persistent representation on the issue. In 2007, he proposed the National Parks and Wildlife (Mining in Sanctuaries) Amendment Bill, and then in 2008 he introduced another bill, the National Parks and Wildlife (Arkaroola–Mt Painter Sanctuary Mining Prohibition) Amendment Bill. What I admire most is that the Hon. Mark Parnell does not just raise these issues, do a media grab and then move onto another issue. He actually shows that he has a genuine interest in such important issues and stays with them for the long haul.

We all know that mining companies and governments see dollar signs long before they are concerned for the environment and the long-term damage, often irreparable damage, that is done with the dollar as the determining factor in the decisions made in this place and the other. Indeed, we are blessed in this country to have unique landscapes such as Arkaroola of great geological and historical value and also the resources that inevitably go with them. I am talking about the minerals and what we see as substances that we should just mine until we can mine no more.

I do not believe that I am one to be considered to be a greenie, but I do recognise that this planet is the only one we have and that for both the people and the planet to survive we do have to change what we are doing currently. We have to work towards developing a mindset that recognises the relationship between this land and the people, who must live together and survive together, rather than the attitude of exploitation of resources that we currently have.

For an example of how things can go so terribly wrong, we only have to look at what happened in the Gulf of Mexico after the BP oil spill. With all the risk management and assessments that were done, and all the safeguards that were put in place, we have seen the death of the Gulf of Mexico. It was a great 24-hour or 48-hour news cycle that talked about the destruction and whatever, but we hear very little about it now. We hear very little about the ongoing struggle that communities around the Gulf of Mexico are experiencing, with poisonous gas emissions now coming from BP's attempts to solve the problem—and they did a terrible job at it.

I think people are getting smarter as we go along and understand that these drilling companies, oil companies and mining companies really do not give a hoot about the damage they create and the damage they leave behind or their half-baked solutions, not based on science but on what will be cheapest to try to cover up what they have done. Quite frankly, Arkaroola is far too precious for us to take that chance with.

I note that even Professor Ian Plimer, a staunch advocate of uranium mining and also outspoken on climate change, with a contrary view to that of the Greens, also agrees that Arkaroola should be off limits. I am glad to see that his credentials as a geologist are coming before his interests in uranium mining. With that, I am glad that the Hon. Mark Parnell has again pushed the envelope, as the Hon. Michelle Lensink put it.

I do not believe we need to pussyfoot around with the language of these motions when they are about protecting such precious reserves that we have, keeping Arkaroola as a protected sanctuary and forcing the Premier of this state to follow through and have this place listed on the World Heritage List in conjunction with a ban on mining. I commend the Hon. Mark Parnell, and I support the motion.