PRESTON HELICOPTER SERVICES, NOISE POLLUTION

Grievance

MS SUE WALKER (Nedlands) [9.33 am]: My grievance is about noise pollution on the Swan River of Perth and is directed to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development. I intend writing also to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage on this matter. The City of Perth issues multiple landing rights to Preston Helicopter Services Pty Ltd at city Causeway car park No 4. I recently received 23 letters from residents of eight streets near the river foreshore of Dalkeith. I have recently written to the Lord Mayor of Perth about the complaints. In a letter to me dated 11 March he attributes the complaint about the noise to one obsessive individual. That is why I am standing here today. I am speaking on behalf of my residents from those eight streets, which are Birdwood Parade, Jutland Parade, Browne Avenue, Nardina Crescent, Iris Avenue, Minora Road, Brockman Avenue, Hobbs Avenue, Throssell Avenue and Wavell Road. Those residents have written to me and complained about the noise generated from Preston Helicopter Services’ craft flying continually over their properties every weekend. The noise from the helicopters affects their lifestyle and tranquillity.

Ms MacTiernan: Who is this grievance to?

Ms SUE WALKER: If the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure listens, she will find out what my speech is about. It is not the first time that noise pollution on our beautiful Swan River has been the subject of some debate. I am thinking about the operation of recreational surf skis that is now properly managed in the area.

The residents have told me that on a typical day sometimes 30 flights operate from the city helipad and pass over their properties to Fremantle and return. After trying to get this matter brought under some sort of control since 1997, according to the documents I have received, I have been asked to employ whatever means I can to restore tranquillity to their homes and suburbs. When I write to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage I will ask her to evaluate the noise pollution level that emanates from those helicopter joy rides to see whether she can do anything about the noise levels that impact on my residents.

The City of Perth undertook a detailed review of this matter. In a letter dated 14 March 2001, it is indicated that the flight path of the Preston Helicopter Services’ helicopters was monitored, and it was found to deviate from the centre of the river. If they fly from the centre of the river to Point Walter, the noise is more manageable.

Mr McRae: Will you hold it up again?

Ms SUE WALKER: I will provide it to the member for Riverton later.

On that occasion the licence held by Preston Helicopter Services was due to expire on 29 April 2001. The City of Perth said -

As you know we have, on a number of occasions, met with Preston Helicopters in trying to negotiate a situation which will allow this valuable tourism service to continue with a minimum of potential impact on local residents whose properties adjoin the river foreshore.

In our most recent review it is evident from information that has been provided to Mr Agnello from Air Services Australia, that Preston Helicopters have deviated to airspace over the foreshore residential properties.

On that occasion the City of Perth said -

we have issued a warning to them that their non-compliance with the current licence conditions will have an impact on any further issue of licences for the future.

Following this letter, a chart showing the helicopter scenic flights preferred Swan River route, which I am holding up to show members of the Legislative Assembly, was agreed to. The words “Route varied to minimise impact on residents and businesses” are at the bottom of the chart.

Mr McRae: Will you hold it up again?

Ms SUE WALKER: I will provide it to the member for Riverton later.

That noise pollution is bothering my residents. In a letter dated 2 July 2001, the City of Perth gave Preston Helicopter Services multiple landing rights, subject to the following conditions -

The flight path . . . shall be restricted generally to the centre of the Swan River as previously agreed between you and Airservices Australia, indicated on the attached plan, . . .

The above conditions have been imposed to ensure the safe and orderly conduct of the operation.

The permit may be withdrawn should Council receive substantiated complaints concerning the operation of the helicopter service.
Since that letter was written I have received 23 letters from people who reside in eight streets in my area, about which I have written to the Lord Mayor. I have also received correspondence from residents in Fremantle. I am aware that the member for Perth has received complaints from his constituents on this issue.

However, I have found that in answer to my correspondence, the City of Perth has been somewhat dismissive about this. I will write to all the councillors, some of whom I know. They are fair and reasonable people. I have suggested that Preston Helicopter Services be permitted to fly scenic tours under a bimonthly agreement and that the City of Perth monitor them. My residents do not want the service to be taken away completely. They say the helicopter may need upgrading. I ask the relevant minister, the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, to speak to the City of Perth about this matter.

To reiterate the concerns of my residents about the noise pollution on the Swan River, I will read some of the letters I have received. A resident in Hobbs Avenue writes -

> These flights from the Causeway Helipad to Fremantle are extremely noisy and the aircraft is slow which increases the nuisance considerably.

Another from a resident in Hobbs Avenue states -

> . . . the annoying noise level of the helicopter flights from the Helipad at the Causeway. At weekends, the whirr of the helicopter is particularly troublesome.

> . . .

> We ask that you address this matter with the Perth City Council.

Another resident in Hobbs Avenue wrote -

> The noise generated by this aircraft is intrusive and extremely irritating.

A resident in Browne Avenue wrote -

> I wish to express my extreme irritation with the continuing noise emitted from the above helicopter . . .

I raise this matter in the Assembly today to ask the relevant ministers, to whom I will also be writing, to put some pressure on the Perth City Council to correctly manage the noise pollution that is concerning the residents in my area.

**MS MacTIERNAN** (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [9.40 am]: This is a puzzling grievance, although I am sure the member has a genuine concern for her constituents. The member has had extensive briefings from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, and I am sure she has been made fully aware that the State Government has no role to play in this matter. This matter was first brought to our attention some time ago by the member for Perth, who has been trying to work with federal and local government authorities to resolve it. I suspect that the member for Nedlands is somewhat lost and not sure how to act on what is obviously a genuine concern of many of her residents. As the member is well aware, this is not a matter over which the State Government has any control.

The member proposes to write to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage to ask her to do something about noise abatement. I point out to the member for Nedlands that, unfortunately, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage will not be able to assist in this regard because the commonwealth law exempts aircraft, including helicopters, from noise abatement restrictions. Consequently, the State has no jurisdiction over noise abatement matters that deal with aircraft. However, it is a concern for many of the residents in both central Perth and the western suburbs.

The licences are granted by Airservices Australia, a federal body. The decision to allow the helipad from which the helicopters operate to be located near the Causeway was made by the Perth City Council. As the member has articulated, the main operator is Preston Helicopter Services Pty Ltd. We have heard many complaints that the operator is not staying within the preferred flight path. Although the department has taken many steps to alert the relevant agencies - the federal Government and the City of Perth - to these problems, it is not something that we -

Ms Sue Walker: Are you speaking on behalf of the Minister for Local Government? What department are you speaking for?

Ms MacTIERNAN: I am speaking on behalf of the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development. I will let him know that the member for Nedlands is not happy with the City of Perth.

Ms Sue Walker: My residents are not happy.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I will also let him know that she is not happy with her inability to get a proper response from the Lord Mayor of Perth. My only suggestion is that she approach her federal colleague the member for
Curtin. I understand that the member for Curtin may be well placed to make some more successful representations to the City of Perth. I am not sure what sort of relationship the member for Nedlands has with the federal member for Curtin, but I think that rather than raise a grievance in this place, the member would be well placed to take up the matter with her federal colleague to ensure that action is taken by Airservices Australia to address the matter.