

K BATTERY — RESTORATION

Statement

HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [5.17 pm]: I want to talk about a project that I would like to get underway in my electorate, at Cape Peron. During the Second World War, the K battery at Cape Peron was part of the Fremantle coastal defence for that part of Western Australia, which had many batteries. It has been sitting there for years rotting away. It is part of our history and is a story that has not really been told properly. The Cape Peron battery site, which is another name for it, is not only a naturally picturesque setting with exceptional snorkelling and a 360-degree coastal view, but also a very important historical site. The whole area is looked after by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. Some of the doors connected to the bunkers have been sitting in the sand. There has been vandalism; someone has been damaging the bricks. It has been falling apart for years. The Department of Parks and Wildlife does its very best to look after that area. I asked the department whether it could put the doors back on the operational bunker. When I was there last Friday, I caught its officers doing it, which was great. The doors cannot be shut on the bunker because it is half full of sand. I asked the department how much money it had in its account to look after the Rockingham Lakes Regional Park. It said that it had about \$200 left, so there is not a lot of money left in the kitty.

I would like to form a committee to rehabilitate that area and chase federal and state government funds, and Lotterywest funds—whatever is needed—to bring it back to where it was 70 years ago. We could turn all those bunkers into mini museums and have some Army memorabilia that is significant to the Peron battery. I recently brought a bunch of councillors up to the Leighton battery, which is looked after by the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia and was also involved in its refurbishment. I will also soon have a look at Oliver Hill. There is awareness that there is definitely a move to do up the battery.

A lot of people go there and do not know the story of what it was all about. When the Japanese bombed Darwin, and I believe more bombs were laid on Darwin than on Pearl Harbor, they then bombed Broome and even Exmouth. The Japanese were definitely on their way down here. The Japanese actually came all the way down to the south metropolitan region. They were 15 kilometres off the coast sitting there in Rockingham and they were watching us. People were wondering whether they would come here and invade. They did not and I think it was because the gun batteries along our coastline probably acted as a very good deterrent. So worried was the government at the time that it shut down Fremantle harbour and ships were made to go into the sound. Imagine what it would have been like being a Western Australian living in that area during the war knowing that Japanese were sitting just 15 kilometres off the coast. There must have been a lot of fear. That is a story that not a lot of people know about. If there is an opportunity to restore these gun batteries close to what they were 70 years ago, it would allow for the future of our children today and tomorrow, because this is also part of their identity as Western Australians and Australians. This is what we are all about. Instead of those batteries sitting there rotting away, I think it is now time they were done up.

I think it would be a fantastic area to have a private memorial at, without taking away from the beautiful memorial we have in Rockingham that is well utilised. It could be a private memorial with a nice private place for loved ones to reflect and probably grieve, not just for people who lost their lives during the First and Second World Wars, but also in the conflicts we face today. I have met some of those soldiers who have come back from the Middle East and some of them are at the Totally and Partially Disabled Veterans of WA property in Baldivis. It can really torment some people. This memorial might be another avenue for people to reflect and I think it is well overdue. It is a good area to have a private memorial. I do not want this to be seen as a distraction from the Mangles Bay marina, because it has nothing to do with that. It is a separate project. It is all part of an area on which some money has been spent over the years. In 1992 HMAS *Adelaide* came and part of those bunkers were dug out and the government at the time put in some pathways, but not a lot of money has been spent there since 1992. It is a well-visited area and there is definitely an opportunity for tourism and education. I will do my utmost to see whether I can pull a committee together to try to get some community interest. One of the first jobs I would like to do is get the sand out of the operations bunker so we can lock it up to stop vandalism and people going inside. Maybe it could be turned into a committee room in which to do the rest of the project. These things take money. There needs to be an interest from the community and volunteers are needed. I hope through the support of all the members for South Metropolitan Region in this place—Hon Kate Doust, Hon Sue Ellery, Hon Simon O'Brien and Hon Nick Goiran—we can all help in some way, whether it be volunteering or anything else. If they have any information, pictures or history, I would very much like to talk to them to obtain it or just to seek their guidance about what else they think we could do in that area—maybe picnic tables, shelters, toilets and so forth. This is not just a Liberal Party thing; I want everyone to be involved. If Mark McGowan wants to come down and help as well, that is excellent; it is top stuff—the more the merrier. This project will need people power. We need the will. If we do not do this, we will lose this piece of Western Australian history and once it is gone, we will never get it back. There is definitely a story to be told

and there is definitely an opportunity to educate not only people today, but also the people of tomorrow. I think at the end of the day, that is a good thing for Western Australia.