

**BUSH FOREVER SITES — PERTH METROPOLITAN REGION**

*Motion*

**HON ALISON XAMON (East Metropolitan)** [2.22 pm]: I move —

That this house notes the finalisation of the Bush Forever metropolitan region scheme amendment and the associated “State Planning Policy 2.8, Bushland Policy for the Perth Metropolitan Region”, and calls on the Barnett government to go further and protect Perth’s unique urban bushland in perpetuity by —

- (a) guaranteeing statutory protection for those same Bush Forever sites;
- (b) legislating or introducing regulations to ensure an appropriate standard of management for those sites; and
- (c) appropriately funding that management.

People in this place who have any idea of what I say here will know that the issue of urban bushland and the preservation of our urban bushland areas is a particular passion of mine. It is something I have been talking about for the two years I have been a member of Parliament. I am particularly interested in protecting the biodiversity values of the South West and the Perth region in particular and have been excited by the fact that we are, even now, discovering new species of flora and fauna in our Bush Forever sites.

With the implementation of Bush Forever, 287 Bush Forever areas have been identified in the metropolitan region scheme maps, and State Planning Policy 2.8 contains special policy provisions for Bush Forever areas. I note we are still waiting for the amendment to the MRS text to identify the purpose of Bush Forever areas, which should also have been done concurrently. That, effectively, provides that Bush Forever is for conservation purposes.

Bush Forever was designed to include these elements. It further included an acknowledgement that, on their own, the Bush Forever areas were not enough and needed to be supported by local reserves, ecological linkages and greenways, and that the Bush Forever office would provide support to achieve these aims. It also included a general presumption against clearing, particularly of threatened ecological communities and vegetation complexes, of which less than 10 per cent currently remains in the Perth metropolitan area Swan coastal plain. I note that most of that is also in the eastern portion of the Swan coastal plain—my electorate, the wonderful east metro.

There was also a Bush Forever advisory group and a Bush Forever management advisory service for three years. This group assisted local governments, the Department of Environment and Conservation and Main Roads WA with caring for their Bush Forever sites. I will note that we could really do with the reinstatement of a management advisory service for the urban nature program. The Bush Forever program incorporated a requirement for local governments to develop local bushland strategies, employed an officer and provided seed funding to assist them in doing so in a consistent way. But I note that not all the management authorities have been established. The program was also to include a management advice and education service for agencies involved in managing Bush Forever sites, although that never really happened in a comprehensive way, and a public awareness strategy, which, unfortunately, has never really happened either. It also included regular auditing and review of Bush Forever sites, including periodic review of new information on the ecology of the Swan coastal plain.

Bush Forever was supposed to establish a conservation system at the regional level through Bush Forever areas and to operate with the clearing controls under the Environmental Protection Act, which is—as far as is achievable—comprehensive and adequate and representative of the ecological communities of the Swan coastal plain portion of the Perth metro region. It also sought to protect and manage significant bushland recommended for protection and management for conservation purposes through a range of implementation mechanisms, and as a collective and shared responsibility and general duty of care on the part of government landowners and the community. Bush Forever was also to provide a policy and implementation framework for significant bushland areas recommended for protection and management to assist conservation planning assessment and decision-making processes.

There is a question to be asked: will the Bush Forever sites be enough to preserve Perth’s character? The commonwealth government’s targets for biodiversity conservation established a target of 30 per cent for ecological communities, which is the threshold below which species loss appears to accelerate exponentially. Bush Forever sites are intended to protect at least 10 per cent of each of the vegetation complexes of the Perth metro area of the Swan coastal plain. Even the opportunity of protecting as little as 10 per cent of seven vegetation types in this area is gone. For another three, even with the full implementation of Bush Forever, they will not quite make 10 per cent. The original Bush Forever report, volume 1, “Policies, Principles and

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Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Lynn MacLaren

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Processes”, recognised the need to fulfil the undertakings of the urban bushland strategy to support local governments in local bushland protection and to develop greenway strategies. On their own they will not be enough to maintain biodiversity in the Perth metro region, and we will need to make sure that all the greenway and ecological linkages remain intact to give the best possible chance of retaining the remaining biodiversity.

In 2010 the Perth metropolitan area of the Swan coastal plain had approximately 90 990 hectares of vegetation cover left, and that included all the plantation areas, which were around 20 000 hectares. At best, we are looking at around 70 000 hectares of native vegetation left in the metro area of the Swan coastal plain out of the original 284 000 hectares or so. Of this amount, 51 200 hectares was originally identified as regionally significant bushland in the Bush Forever program, and some juggling has been done with the borders of some of the sites, and some additional sites have been added to the program since then.

Clearing of native vegetation in the Perth metro area has been occurring at an alarming rate. In just the four years from 2006 to 2010 more than 700 hectares of native bush was authorised to be cleared under the native vegetation regulations. I do not know how much has been authorised under other statutes. Since 1990, the area of vegetation—that is not necessarily native vegetation—in the Perth metropolitan area of the Swan coastal plain has reduced by 50 000 hectares, and half of that went in the five years to 2010. If the vegetation cover keeps being removed at that rate, even taking into account the pine plantations, we have 10 years before the only bushland left in the Perth metropolitan area of the Swan coastal plain will be the identified Bush Forever sites. We will not have any ecological linkages, local reserves or greenways, which will defeat the purpose. We also need to know that, by removing those links, the pressures on the remaining Bush Forever sites will be substantial.

The history of Bush Forever is an interesting one. In 2000, Bush Forever 2000 was created. I have been told that it came from some of the best science that was available. People speak glowingly of it. It had two volumes: volume 1 was “Policies, Principles and Processes”, and volume 2 was “Directory of Bush Forever Sites”. The government of Western Australia at the time endorsed Bush Forever as the means of seeking the appropriate protection and management of areas of regionally significant bushland on the Swan coastal plain portion of the Perth metropolitan region and a balance between environmental, social and economic objectives. In 2004, it went out for public comment; and, in 2006, further amendments to Bush Forever were made after the submission period. A resolution of the Western Australian Planning Commission was adopted to remove special control areas and rename Bush Forever protection areas to Bush Forever areas. Of course, in 2010, Bush Forever was passed, as noted in the motion before this house. That was tabled in Parliament on 22 June 2010. State planning policy 2.8 was also released concurrently.

I have heard it asked: is Bush Forever not sufficient in terms of statutory recognition? The answer is no. It was supposed to deliver statutory protection. It has identified Bush Forever areas on the metropolitan region scheme maps and it has delivered enhanced protection for sites that have been rezoned to parks and recreation, but the preservation, conservation and management of Bush Forever sites depends on the zoning, reserve status and ownership of each individual site. There is still no statutory purpose for Bush Forever areas; their purpose is defined by zoning and reserve status rather than by being Bush Forever areas. We need the MRS text. Bush Forever recognises that some sites were already zoned for uses that were incompatible with conservation, such as mining minerals sands. There was talk of trying to keep the bush nice, if they could. Some of those sites were subject to negotiated planning solutions to try to reach an agreement about how to handle the bushland as the sites are developed in the future. Those sites are clearly not protected for conservation in the way in which we need them to be.

Bush Forever MRS amendment 1082/33 identified, as I have said, 287 Bush Forever areas that have now been incorporated as an overlay in the MRS maps. The purpose of Bush Forever areas is specifically dealt with in an MRS text amendment that was initially part of the Bush Forever MRS amendment, but has not yet been finalised or incorporated into the MRS text through regulations. Considerations when making planning decisions about Bush Forever areas are specifically dealt with in state planning policy 2.8, which was released concurrently with MRS amendment 1082/33. So I want to make a few comments about parks and recreation zoning under this amendment. There are 94 zoned sites, including land previously zoned public and private land and now zoned parks and recreation. Approximately 79 per cent of vegetation within Bush Forever sites has now been reserved for parks and recreation at the finalisation of MRS amendment 1082/33, and some sites were already zoned parks and recreation. There were 35 additions to Bush Forever areas and areas zoned for parks and recreation. These are largely additions to existing sites carried out in MRS amendment 1161/41, but I note that these additions are still to be incorporated into the main MRS map. It still has not been fully finalised. What can be done on land that is zoned for parks and recreation? It states that development on land zoned parks and recreation and reserved for parks and recreation for purposes inconsistent with the purpose of the reserve will not be supported. Things that can be supported in parks and recreation-zoned land can include commercial purposes ancillary to the purpose of the reserve and likely to enhance public access to and enjoyment of the reserve, and

passive and/or active sporting pursuits. It permits incorporated clubs to locate on the land for sporting purposes. It also includes developing land for playing fields, buildings and car parks. It does not permit uses that would result in the long-term restriction of public access. Land zoned parks and recreation under amendment 1082/33 did not have a stated purpose, although some areas were incorporated in regional and national parks. As I have said, Bush Forever areas still do not have a purpose stated in the MRS text. I certainly recommend that an express statement be made about the conservation purpose of all Bush Forever areas zoned parks and recreation.

The MRS text amendment is still waiting to be finalised. It is supposed to come in the form of regulation. Currently, Bush Forever areas are defined and the boundaries are known, but there is no statutory purpose. The best we have are the considerations in state planning policy 2.8. The text amendment for the 2004 comment period included special control areas, which were also known as Bush Forever protection areas, and made clear statements that Bush Forever areas were for conservation and protection. We know that the special control areas have been removed and that the word “protection” has also been removed from Bush Forever areas—that is, Bush Forever protection areas are now Bush Forever areas. We recommend that this text amendment be finalised so that we can provide a statutory purpose for the Bush Forever areas.

State planning policy 2.8, which came out simultaneously, notes that any proposal or decision making that is likely to have an adverse impact directly or indirectly on regionally significant bushland within a Bush Forever area must consider the policy measures in state planning policy 2.8. The aim of the policy is to provide a policy and implementation framework that will ensure that bushland protection and management issues in the Perth metropolitan region are appropriately addressed and are integrated with broader land-use planning and decision making. This will secure the long-term protection of biodiversity and associated environmental values. The policy recognises the protection and management of significant bushland areas as a fundamental consideration in the planning process, while also seeking to integrate and balance wider environmental, social and economic considerations. In general terms, the policy does not prevent development when it is consistent with the measures in this policy and with other planning and environmental considerations. The first and most important thing to note is that state planning policy 2.8 does not actually prohibit development within Bush Forever areas or on Bush Forever sites; it merely requires that a decision in relation to these sites be made only after consideration of the policies listed. Unreserved or privately owned land and land with existing commitments and approvals is not protected from subdivision and development. Negotiated planning solutions have low conservation targets of 30 per cent, which can include the 10 per cent public open space that has to be part of every development. Land owned by the government and reserved in categories other than parks and recreation, or land that has not had its purpose identified as conservation or is vested in any public body other than the Department of Environment and Conservation, may be developed or built upon for those other purposes, such as rail and road reserves. That is not strong enough. The state planning policy is not a legally binding document. It is a relevant consideration for the decision maker, but neither the Western Australian Planning Commission nor the local government is statutorily required to take SPP 2.8 into account when considering a development proposal. Section 77 of the Planning and Development Act requires a local government to have only due regard to a state planning policy in preparation for or amendment of a local planning scheme. The State Administrative Tribunal also has to have only due regard. Therefore, this is not line-in-the-sand stuff for the protection of our urban bushland areas.

Some immediate statutory steps could be undertaken to protect Bush Forever sites from destruction. We could gazette Bush Forever areas as environmentally sensitive areas under section 52 of the Environmental Protection Act so that there would be no exemptions for clearing without a permit, regardless of planning approval status. It would mean that Bush Forever sites were treated the same as other environmentally sensitive areas. We could have a specific prohibition against clearing Bush Forever sites in the clearing principles in schedule 5 of the Environmental Protection Act. I make the point that a lot of people think Bush Forever sites already have these protections. From speaking to people in my community, I know they certainly believe that was the intention of Bush Forever.

There are examples of Bush Forever areas that are under threat. My colleague Hon Lynn MacLaren will undoubtedly speak about some of the most high-profile areas because she is doing an enormous amount of work on these—namely, Point Peron and the Beeliar wetlands. Point Peron very clearly shows how even being a class A reserve does not protect a Bush Forever site from the developer’s eye. Of course, the Roe Highway stage 8 project is an ongoing threat to the Beeliar wetlands. Both of these examples demonstrate that the community wants these sites protected but the protections that we have for these Bush Forever sites are insufficient. However, as I said, Hon Lynn MacLaren will undoubtedly speak more about that.

In my own electorate, the East Metropolitan Region, a good example is the Bushmead Rifle Range, which was recently sold to a developer after years of being in commonwealth government ownership. That site has been earmarked for potential development as an urban site since at least the 1992 foothills structure plan and it is still under consideration as a potential site for urban expansion. It is currently not zoned urban, urban deferred or

even rural; it is still zoned for commonwealth government purposes. The developer expects to be able to release between 600 and 900 housing lots, depending on the planning requirements, as this project progresses. However, the Bushmead site is Forrestfield complex vegetation of which we already have less than 10 per cent remaining in the Perth metropolitan portion of the Swan coastal plain. Therefore, even if we could save this whole area, we still would not meet the minimum goals of Bush Forever for this vegetation type. Given how precious this type of vegetation is in the Perth metro area and the numerous other environmental reasons to preserve this site—it has only ever been recognised as having potential for urbanisation, not that it is required for urbanisation—a better outcome would have been for the land to be zoned for parks and recreation and managed as part of the new bioregional park. We know that the current statutory “protections” for Bush Forever sites make it very easy to foresee a circumstance in which most, if not all, the environmental value of the site could be lost. I have also spoken numerous times in this place about the Anstey–Keane bushland in Forrestdale, another site in the East Metropolitan Region that is an example of how simply being zoned Bush Forever is by no means sufficient protection. The entire site is currently under threat of being cut in half by a road being commissioned by the local council. That will have the effect of completely destroying the fauna communities on that site because the site will effectively be cut in half and disrupted. That is highly concerning and an indication of how little existing protections manage to achieve. We know that there are many other sites in the scheme that are currently zoned for roads, mining or forestry that, even if they are not threatened at the moment, certainly can be threatened in the future.

There is also the issue of the management of these sites because we know that just because a site is reserved for conservation does not mean that it is being managed for conservation. There is no statutory requirement for all Bush Forever sites to be managed for the protection of their conservation values. That sounds like a strange thing to say. Of course, there is the thinking that if it is bushland, surely we do not need to do that, but the reality is that our Bush Forever sites are subject to a range of pressures that they would not have if they did not exist right in the middle of urban Perth. That is why we need to talk about management issues. Until the metropolitan region scheme text amendment is made, the Bush Forever areas will not have a statutory purpose. All land nominally has a manager and the owners of land are responsible for the management of that land. This means that the management of Bush Forever sites for conservation is inconsistent, depending on whether they have been incorporated into existing conservation parks of whatever kind, whereas it is clear that Bush Forever sites should be managed in a way that recognises their regionally significant environmental values. Bush Forever sites located in the metropolitan area need management that reflects this. By their very nature, as I said, Bush Forever sites in the metropolitan area are subject to pressures that reserves and parks further from Perth experience to a far lesser degree, if at all. Leaving Bush Forever sites to manage themselves works only where the bush is in a pristine condition and is far away from people, which is not the case for Bush Forever sites. It is not uncommon for Bush Forever sites to be unfenced; in fact, I would say that that is the state of most of them. Bush Forever sites often have four-wheel-drive tracks through them, and dirt bikes and horses go through them. People who live in the hills tell me constantly of their concerns about the noise on a Sunday afternoon from some of these sites being constantly torn through.

**Hon Nick Goiran:** How do you prevent that from happening?

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** That is a really good question, Hon Nick Goiran. The use of appropriate fencing has worked quite successfully on other sites. Different types of fencing need to be erected because if we simply put up a fence, ordinarily, people might just cut a hole in it and put a dirt bike through. There are some good examples—Lightning Swamp is one that comes to mind—of really good fencing that has been designed to ensure that incursions by off-road vehicles are greatly diminished, if not almost impossible. I think that is the way we need to go to address that issue, and it is a very serious one.

**Hon Nick Goiran:** Would it allow for —

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Sorry, if the member does not mind, I have limited time. I am happy to have a debate with the member later.

I am often approached by community members concerned about the amount of rubbish being dumped in their local Bush Forever sites. I am sure members who have gone to their local Bush Forever sites have seen cases of illegal dumping. That problem also can be solved with fencing. Of course, we have the issue of ferals, both weeds and animals, which need to be managed. These pests are likely to invade through high-traffic areas and from surrounding properties.

Of course, in many instances people who live around these areas want to take a primary role in ensuring that these sites are kept healthy and safe. I applaud the many friends groups that play such a valuable role in protecting these sites, but they need assistance with funding, particularly for weed management and the like. They also need to be supported in their efforts to ensure that there is appropriate signage, fencing and the like.

There has been a lot of interest recently in the importance of nature in the development of children. I note that some eminent speakers have talked about that. It is a really important part of how our future Perth should look, so the land needs to be actively managed to protect the bushland and to ensure it retains the qualities that led to its identification as regionally significant in the first place. As I said, the regionally significant bushland within the Bush Forever area is subject to on-site verification. Failing to manage that bushland, and letting it fall into poor condition through neglect, could lead to it being no longer recognised as regionally significant bushland, in which case the small amount of protection that being recognised as a Bush Forever site provides will no longer be relevant. Therefore, that would defeat the purpose.

In relation to management issues, and what statutory land management looks like, at the moment, management requirements vary according to which act the land falls under; that is, the Land Administration Act, the Conservation and Land Management Act or the Environmental Protection Act. Bush Forever sites as a special category are not recognised under any of these acts. Therefore, there is no minimum standard of management—that is, what the management plan must contain as an absolute minimum—for any classification of land specified in these acts. Under the Land Administration Act 1997, class A reserves are required to be managed. Some Bush Forever sites are class A reserves, but many are not. With regard to crown reserves vested in local government, the Minister for Planning can request that the management plan be presented. However, there is no indication that that is occurring. There is also no indication of what is required to be in the plan in the first place.

What we know with our Bush Forever sites is that 97 sites or parts of sites are owned by private or commercial/corporate interests such as developers. There are 15 Bush Forever sites that are not managed by a local or state government authority but are government-owned properties. In relation to Bush Forever private land management, government may impose restrictive covenants or prohibitions. But active management depends on voluntary actions by landholders and landowners. DEC can provide assistance and some funding for management work. But private owners cannot be required to manage their land for conservation unless there is a change of land use and management obligations are required as part of the condition of approval. If private owners voluntarily enter into a conservation covenant, requirements can be imposed. But I understand that there are not many of those. I will be very interested to know how many there are, although I do not expect that information to be immediately at hand.

In relation to nature conservation covenants, the DEC website states —

The nature conservation covenant is a voluntary, legally binding document that has provisions restricting activities that might threaten the land's conservation values. Every conservation covenant is individually negotiated between the Department and the landowner, and aims to maintain the conservation values of the bushland whilst allowing for flexibility to reflect the landowner's wishes for the land.

The DEC website says also that management guidelines are developed to help guide the future management of the land to meet conservation objectives; some funding for fencing or other management identified in the management guidelines is available on a case-by-case basis; and ongoing conservation advice is available to landowners to help them in their conservation efforts. There is also, potentially, tax and rate relief for landowners. But this needs to be promoted and pushed far more heavily. Provision can be made for proactive management for conservation. But this is entirely voluntary. Much more support, both financial and expertise, needs to be given to private landowners of Bush Forever sites to assist them in caring for their land. In relation to DEC management of sites, I understand that the Western Australian Planning Commission is trying to prioritise the transfer of Bush Forever sites to DEC. A total of 117 sites—or nearly half the Bush Forever sites—are being managed by DEC. Although there is some initial funding for the management of those sites, there is no recurring funding for ongoing management. That funding will be required in future to complete the picture.

I turn now to the urban nature program. That program is managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation, and it has three full-time equivalent staff and a recurrent budget of \$230 000 a year. That program provides technical advice and on-ground support for land managers working to protect, manage and restore bushland and wetlands in DEC's Swan region and beyond. The program also helps to identify, demonstrate and promote best practice bushland management; raise awareness of the values of Perth's bushlands and wetlands; and foster the development of skills through the provision of field days, workshops and training programs. That is very important to those people who, as I mentioned, are primarily volunteers who live locally and are keen to manage these sites. The urban nature program is based at DEC's Swan region office. The primary focus of the program is on regionally significant bushland, including Bush Forever sites. The program works across tenures with community groups, government officers and private landowners involved in the conservation and management of the region's natural areas. This group is doing exactly the work that is needed to assist land managers in managing their land for conservation. But they are, frankly, completely under-resourced. There is no way that this group, with only three FTEs, and this small budget, are able to achieve the worthy aims of this program. The Urban Bushland Council, which works with this group, has identified that, at the very least, this

group needs to be provided with funding for a full-time ecologist, and at least two mobile units and crews that are able to go to Bush Forever sites. The funding that has been provided is a good start, but it is woefully inadequate and nowhere near what is needed.

In terms of the statutory measures that could be taken—referring to the first part of this motion—first and foremost, obviously, we need to finalise the metropolitan region scheme text amendment to provide a statutory purpose for Bush Forever areas. I hope that when I hear the response from government, a time frame will be given for when that is likely to occur. Of course, we also need to create regulations to set minimum standards for management towards the purpose identified in the MRS text, which I am certainly hoping will make it clear that the purpose is conservation. These regulations need to be created under both the Environmental Protection Act and the Land Administration Act.

We also need to look at what is the best practice for the creation of management plans for these sites. Those management plans need to identify the issues that are specific to each site, because each site will have different threats and different issues around its management, and measures that can be put in place to address those issues. Those management plans will need to identify strategies for the control of ferals—as I have mentioned, that is weeds as well as feral animals—for the control of dieback, and for the control of fire in those bushland areas. They will need to provide protocols for managing public access. Again, I want to mention Lightning Swamp, because some really good measures have been achieved in the creation of that Bush Forever site. There is also a need for local community engagement, because we find that where there is local community engagement and ownership of a site, people tend to take a far more vigilant role in its maintenance. That role helps to make sure arsonists are caught, that people who are engaging in illegal dumping are caught, and that people who are going through the area in four-wheel-drives and on bikes are challenged and, hopefully, turfed out. It is also about participating in local activities, such as the weeding of areas and the like. We even have some friends groups that make a point of running tours through their various sites and pointing out the special nature of each individual site. We also need to make sure, as part of the statutory management plan, that each plan is subject to both a five-year interim review and a 10-year review, so that we can see whether the management plans are still pertinent to the management of those sites.

An example of a good management plan is Bungendore Park in the City of Armadale. That is not in the Bush Forever study area. However, it has been pointed out by people who know that it is a particularly good example of a management plan, both in the way it has been developed, and in its implementation. Therefore, when we are looking at minimum requirements, that would be the good place to start.

There is still a great deal of room to enhance the protection of Bush Forever areas. At the moment, only the sites that have been zoned parks and recreation, and that are reserved for the purpose of conservation, and are being managed for conservation, are given the level of protection that Bush Forever aspired to provide.

The purpose of zoning a metropolitan region scheme is not directly specified for all Bush Forever sites; the MRS text is still missing in action to define the purpose of the Bush Forever area overlays, and statutory management provisions are entirely missing. There are still sites—15 that we know of for sure—for which managers have not yet been appointed; however, there are many others on private lands. There are management plans for some sites that are completely out of date, but I suppose they are lucky that they have something, because we know that a range of sites do not have anything.

We need funding to assist managers to develop and implement plans, both seed funding as well as ongoing expert assistance and funding to assist with ongoing management. As I mentioned, things will need to be done such as fixing fences and dealing with weeds and the like. Of course, we also need ongoing funding to assist with the monitoring and auditing of Perth urban bushland.

The protection of Bush Forever areas is patchy and inconsistent, and depends on how the particular piece of land happens to be zoned, reserved, vested or owned. Even areas with the best possible current protection have developers proposing plans that the communities have to fight, instead of being able to trust that the protections are in place, and that is just not good enough. Management of Bush Forever areas varies according to how the land is zoned, but recognition of the importance of the sites should not change. Statutory management requirements could be put in place with the right political will, and I call on the government to provide funding and expertise, and to institute further statutory plans to incorporate proactive management for the conservation of all Bush Forever sites.

Finalising Bush Forever was a good move; establishing Bush Forever in 2000 was a good move; but that is by no means the end of the matter. It needs to be progressed, and I certainly hope that the government does not decide to rest on its laurels for what it has achieved to date because, if it does, it will not ultimately achieve the outcomes that we hoped for with the creation of Bush Forever in the first place.

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [3.02 pm]: I am very pleased to lead the Labor Party's debate on this motion and I am very glad that this motion has finally worked its way to the top of the notice paper. We have the chance today to put on record some of our serious reservations about the way that the Barnett government is handling the management and protection of Bush Forever sites.

Two things immediately come to mind when looking at this motion. The first is the moves that the government has already made, acknowledged in the motion, in finalising the Bush Forever MRS amendment and producing "State Planning Policy 2.8: Bushland Policy for the Perth Metropolitan Region". As the member who moved the motion pointed out, going back through some of the documentation gives us some 11 or 12 years of material to draw on. It is very interesting to look at how the pace of the objective of preserving significant bush areas of the Perth metropolitan area on the Swan coastal plain has gained momentum over the dozen or so years since this plan was initially formulated.

I want to commence my remarks this afternoon by paying tribute to some of the really magnificent individuals and groups that have aligned themselves with the political cause of urban bushland in our community. Two groups to which I will make repeated reference in my contribution are the Urban Bushland Council of WA—particularly Mary Gray and Margaret Owen, with whom I am fortunate enough to meet quite regularly—and a group called SERCUL. That is an acronym for the South East Regional Centre of Urban Landcare WA. Again, there are some very inspiring people who work under the banner of SERCUL.

A couple of months ago I paid a visit to SERCUL and was sitting on its back verandah, looking over a magnificent area that many members of this house will have driven over or through many times in the course of getting about their business, perhaps without having looked to either side of the road and realising that around the SERCUL headquarters in Cannington is some of the best and most precious urban bushland in the whole metropolitan area.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** It's beautiful.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** As Hon Sue Ellery says, it is indeed beautiful. I was told a wonderful story about a person who lived in the middle of the metropolitan area but had a stream near her house. She had got herself a kayak and had set off exploring in it one day, and ended up at the SERCUL head office in Cannington. Who would ever have thought that one could make one's way through the southern suburbs in such a spectacularly beautiful way? She subsequently became one of SERCUL's main sources of expertise, particularly in designing its website.

However, something else was said that afternoon that I thought was particularly memorable. Knowing that this motion was going to come on for debate in the fairly near future, I decided then that I would introduce my remarks by referring to this quote. Somebody said that what is happening to the way we are treating our Bush Forever sites is like buying the *Mona Lisa* and leaving it on the back verandah. We have some truly magnificent natural bushland areas that comprise the 287 Bush Forever sites on the Swan coastal plain; yet we leave a lot of them to become pretty degraded scrub areas. One of the problems we have is that our urban bushland is largely composed of banksia plantations. One might walk down a suburban street and see what looks like, to the untutored eye, an area that people use as a shortcut to get from street to street through a back way, where kids ride their bikes around or where people walk their pets. It might look like pretty scrubby land, but in fact we have some of the most precious and endangered values pertaining to biodiversity that one is ever likely to find in the metropolitan area, in some cases.

I thought Hon Nick Goiran's interjection was interesting, when he clearly expressed surprise that we should be talking about fencing some of these areas. This is one of the most important and urgent things that needs doing. As the mover of the motion pointed out, there are some very innovative ways of indicating the boundaries of these areas. We can actually indicate, to the casual passerby, that these are areas to which something special pertains, that people cannot just have open slather, and that the areas are worthy of perhaps more serious consideration than just being degraded areas.

I want to draw the attention of honourable members to volume 1 of the final report on Bush Forever, "Policies, Principles and Processes", dated December 2000. This was a paper, produced at the tail end of the previous Liberal government, on Bush Forever. It starts with a very lengthy vision statement, because, as honourable members will begin to realise from listening to this debate, a great deal can be said about the protection of Bush Forever sites. Members will be glad to know that I will not read much of this into *Hansard*. There are a few key concepts that are beautifully summarised on the first page of the vision statement. I want to give honourable members a flavour of how that vision statement goes. It starts —

Conserving biological diversity ... is one of the major global environmental challenges facing humanity. The Western Australian State of the Environment Report ... acknowledged that the loss of biodiversity and habitats through clearing, habitat degradation, human interference and the introduction

of pests and weeds are some of the State's most serious environmental problems. Australia has a major role to play in the conservation of biodiversity ... Perth's biodiversity is one of the highest recorded in any major city, and through Bush Forever, Perth has a unique opportunity to become the biodiversity capital of Australia.

Through effective environmental planning, conserving biodiversity can enhance the quality of the city as a place to live, without compromising the provision of jobs, homes and essential services.

I want to particularly underline that last sentence —

Through effective environmental planning, conserving biodiversity can enhance the quality of the city as a place to live, without compromising the provision of jobs, homes and essential services.

It is very important to understand that in supporting a motion in these terms we are not talking about some highfalutin abstract notion of preserving little bits of bush for the sake of preserving them; we are talking about adding to the quality of our urban life. We are talking about enhancing the quality of life as it is lived in a modern Western Australian city. The vision statement goes on —

Bush Forever is about “Keeping the Bush in the City”. Urban bushland contributes to Perth's unique character and quality of life and has often been described as “the heart and lungs of the city”.

That is another important point. We are talking not just about physical health—that is, heart and lungs keeping the body going—but also about the psychological health of Perth's urban community. The vision statement continues —

The woodlands and shrublands of Perth's bushland, although perhaps lacking the immediate visual impact of the tall southern forests, have their own special beauty tied to their diversity and intricacy of form. An important aim of Bush Forever is to foster a greater awareness and appreciation of urban bushland, and to develop a stronger sense of responsibility and belonging by the community through active management to control threatening processes.

That one paragraph beautifully expresses that sense of both physical and psychological health that pertains to our protection of urban bushland. It goes on —

Bushland conservation not only fulfils a moral obligation to protect habitats from destruction and save species from extinction, it also protects invaluable resources for education, heritage, tourism, scientific and medical research and provides waterways protection, microclimate control, biological control of pests and diseases, visual amenity, and places for quiet contemplation, relaxation and a sense of place. Every city needs its natural spaces: they are impossible to replace once lost.

If ever we wanted a one-size-fits-all solution to add quality to urban living, surely it is summed up in that list. We are not only talking about the education of our young people, the effect of climate on our urban environment and the conservation of precious and irreplaceable values pertaining to biodiversity, we are also talking about visual amenity and, once again, that sense of psychological wellbeing, which does not have to be sacrificed just because a person lives in an urban environment.

There is one further paragraph from that vision statement that I want to place on the record to show how, 11 years after it was written, these values are just as relevant to us today as they were in the year 2000. It goes on —

However, Bush Forever recognises that biodiversity conservation cannot be achieved by governments alone, with a reliance on a system of conservation reserves. The combined efforts of State and local governments, the community and private landowners will be essential for the protection of valuable bushland resources. A general duty of care for future generations, partnerships and a sense of shared responsibility are essential ingredients of Bush Forever.

It is sad that we have to conclude today, 11 years after that was written, that although governments have certainly chugged along with the process, it is the community that stepped up to the mark. Many times during the course of Labor's two terms in office the concession was made that this is a complex matter and that we have to get it right from a planning and conservation point of view. Local governments have also weighed in. Every local government has its view about the best way to conserve bushland areas. However, it is the community that really comes out of that decade of planning with a gold star. The community has really stepped up to the mark when it comes to putting effort and determination into contributing and translating that commitment into genuinely practical terms. I have now been to two or three award ceremonies for the Swan River Trust's Alcoa grants, which go directly to volunteers who work to conserve these sites. It is an absolute inspiration to sit for a couple of hours and watch group after group walk up to collect what is often quite a small amount of money. Not only do I get a real sense of how far a dollar will go when it comes to funding some of these voluntary efforts, but also I get a sense of the enormous range of people who are prepared to give up their time and energy to work constructively to preserve their local bushland and natural areas. I have seen schoolchildren collect awards and I

have seen people who are well into their 80s, in fact even into their 90s, who are still actively involved, and everybody in between. It is absolutely inspirational. The community really deserves a special accolade for the last dozen or so years of Bush Forever.

I have put on record some of the fundamental values that pertain to the protection of urban bushland. I participated recently in a seminar—only participated in an audience sense—put on by the Urban Bushland Council, which was opened by Hon Liz Behjat on behalf of the minister. I do not know how long Hon Liz Behjat was able to stay, but I stayed for about half the day. One noticeable thing, incidentally, was that sitting in the front row was a child, who turned out to be 10 years old, with his father, listening to some very technical, erudite presentations about all the different aspects of urban bushland protection. When we broke for a cup of coffee, I chatted to the boy. I asked him whether it was a pupil-free day and whether because dad had been going to this seminar he had to be there because there was no school that day. But no, he had actually pressured his father to come along. This child stood there and repeated back to me some statistics that had just been used by Neale Bougher, who is somebody well known to people on this side of the house as a fungi expert. Neale had just given a brilliant presentation about what fungi does in urban bushland sites. It is quite a remarkable story, which I could not even begin to reproduce here. I know that the Urban Bushland Council WA is working on putting out a series of papers connected with that seminar, and Dr Neale Bougher's contribution will be well worth studying. This child repeated back to me some of the statistics used in that presentation. One of the things Dr Bougher talked about was the fact that there are something like 140 000 fungi species in Banksia woodlands, of which we have identified about 10 per cent. It was a most extraordinary statistic, and Dr Bougher went through all the years he had been doing this research noting how many new species he had found in each year. That was the data that the child repeated back to me. When I say that this is an issue that has captured the passions of a whole spectrum of ages and backgrounds in the community, nowhere was that brought home to me more clearly than in talking to that young boy.

It was a most interesting morning, and I take my hat off to the Urban Bushland Council for putting on these seminars. It is the second of its kind in the last year or so. The first seminar was at Murdoch University and was about black cockatoos. As a result of that, they produced "Endangered Black Cockatoos in Western Australia", a magnificent publication, which I am sure honourable members will go back to their offices to hunt out—because it was sent to everybody. Another publication will be coming out about this urban bushland seminar that I am talking about now. What the seminars impressed on me was this central concept about Bush Forever sites. It is not a question of a blanket campaign to protect bushland areas. It is not about whether to develop or not to develop. It is about how to develop and where to develop in such a way that we do not needlessly destroy some of these spots that are valued for their biodiversity.

That was a most worthwhile morning as far as I was concerned. I came away with a concept that I had never heard before. I have reflected on it quite a lot since that time and I want to share it with honourable members now. That was the concept of ecological permeability. The point was made that too often when we design new subdivisions or urban developments we think in terms of silos. We sit down with our maps; we draw dotted lines; we put rings around areas that we want to preserve and then we sell the rest to developers. We end up with conservation silos that are separated by fairly intense urban development. It was as if there was an unplanned motive that ran through the whole morning of presentations; that is, if only we could grasp this concept of ecological permeability, we could enhance both the values of the urban development areas and the areas that we are preserving for their biodiversity. I will give honourable members a bit of the flavour of what this concept involves. Often when we talk about the ways that we need to protect the black cockatoos, we talk about offsets. For example, I refer to the debate we had last year in this place about the area around Jandakot that is being developed, which I think will establish itself as a test case for the effectiveness of the government's offset program. With species like black cockatoos, there is some value in talking about offsets, and I am sure that other members on this side of the house would agree with me. Black cockatoos are large birds—we all know what they look like. They can fly a long way and they can be encouraged into other areas if we provide the right sort of habitat for them—if we conserve their habitat logs and all that sort of thing. Indeed, there is a lot of material available now, even on the Department of Environment and Conservation website, about how to design an urban backyard to encourage black cockatoos to take up residence.

What I learnt that morning in connection with this concept of ecological permeability was that many smaller species do not survive if we block off their escape route from an area of urban bushland, particularly some small birds that live only in an area with the circumference of about 250 metres. It is an astonishingly small area in which they make their home, and they do not go further than that. It is as if at the moment we have this blank spot around the edges of our thinking about urban bushland. As I said earlier, we just draw the lines on the map around these areas and say that within that area everything is protected but outside the area it is open slather and people can build concrete paths and that sort of thing. With a relatively painless tweak to the way that we conceptualise these things, we could start planning corridors and building this ecological permeability into many

of our urban settings. I was convinced that morning by the four or five presenters that I heard that doing so would add such a significant quality to the work that we are doing on the protection of biodiversity values that it would more than pay off the effort put into it.

I know that government members opposite will have picked up that as well as an acknowledgement of what the government has done thus far, there is obviously an element of criticism in the motion as it has been expressed by the mover. I want to add my comments to what that criticism is based on in the hope that these points will be addressed in some substantial way by the minister who is going to respond to the motion.

We have 287 Bush Forever sites in the metropolitan area of the Swan coastal plain. A Bush Forever site without a management plan is, as I described earlier in my comments, too often just like having a piece of remnant scrub in a subdivision. It is not recognised by the people who live in the area for what it is, and too often it is degraded by the activities that go on in that area. It is not rocket science; we do not have to reinvent the wheel. We just have to ensure that every Bush Forever site has a management plan in place. In Statement of Planning Policy 2.8, three types of management plan are identified: a straightforward bushland management plan; an environmental management plan; and, finally, a sustainability strategy. These plans relate to the tenure of the land, who has the care of it and whether it is in private ownership. Also, these 287 Bush Forever sites have different classifications: Bush Forever reserves; urban, industrial or resource development land; government land or public infrastructure; rural lands and something called regional creek lines. Obviously, each area will call for its own kind of management plan. In my talks with the people at the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare, they underlined the point that we can solve a substantial part of the problems relating to an unmanaged Bush Forever site by putting some sort of perimeter boundary up, which indicates even to casual users that they are entering something a bit special. I first came across this in the Kensington bush site, between Kent Street Senior High School and the police station on George Street, which I am sure many South Metropolitan members will be familiar with. It is a magnificent area and there are hundreds of volunteers who work in that area. People are even allowed to walk their dogs through it, as long as they keep them on a lead. I must say that I always used to do that but many people do not. There are signs everywhere telling people how to behave in that bushland area. Over the years that the friends group has been managing the site, it has become a magnificent example of an urban bushland-preserved area. In fact, I often used to think that if we blindfolded someone from the country or another part of the world and took them into the place, they would not know they were within about four minutes of the CBD because the volunteers have cared for it so very well.

I wanted to get some of that information on the record some time around the middle of last month. I do not usually ask questions that are too difficult to provide the answers to, particularly having spoken to people such as Mary Gray from the Urban Bushland Council and Margaret Owen. I know how long this work has been going on, and many of the people now involved in those voluntary groups have a professional background. Many are environmental scientists who have spent most of their working lives designing policies and plans to protect urban bushland. I was pretty confident that the information I sought would be available within the time specified for questions without notice, but of which some notice was given. I asked —

- (1) Of the 287 Bush Forever sites identified for protection and management in state planning policy 2.8, how many of the areas in state government ownership —

I narrowed it down to state government ownership —

have in place —

I listed the three points I referred to earlier. The question continues —

- (2) How many of the areas in private ownership have bushland or environmental management plans in place?

I also asked how many of those areas were classified in each of the five subcategories I have just been through; how many of them were not protected through the establishment of Bush Forever sites in the MRS; why they were not protected; and whether it was the government's intention to have management plans or sustainability strategies in place for all the sites. I was told it was too hard, that it was not possible to answer any part of that question. Initially, I was disbelieving; I thought somebody had misunderstood the information I was looking for. Now I am not as sure that that was the case because, as members can imagine, I asked that question again in the estimates process last week. Frankly, the answers only compounded my suspicion about what the government is doing and my very great fear that the ball has effectively been dropped.

Let us start with the Western Australian Planning Commission division on page 575 of the budget papers and an asset investment of \$118.4 million for the 2011–12 budget. It sounds like quite a lot of money. I have already described to honourable members that when we go to some of the grant award ceremonies, we realise how far a couple of hundred dollars can go. The amount of \$118.4 million sounds like quite a lot of money. Then we read that the asset investment that is to be funded from that money includes continuation of the Bush Forever

Program—hooray!—and acquisition of land under the metropolitan region scheme, the Peel and the greater Bunbury region schemes and the development of facilities on reserved land. All of a sudden \$118 million is supposed to fund an awful lot of asset investment. The original estimate—I am going back now about 11 or 12 years—to acquire all the Bush Forever sites was between \$500 million and \$750 million. Originally, the plan was that the metropolitan region investment fund would pay for that acquisition. Of course, subsequently the MRIF was, essentially, wound up; it is not used for that any more. That is why I went looking for the line item in the budget that would give me some sort of dollar figure that related to the continuation of the Bush Forever program. I put it to honourable members that that asset acquisition program is negligible compared with the original estimate of funds that would be required to put in place a decent Bush Forever program.

We find another reference to urban bushland management in the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority division on page 834 of the budget papers where it refers to demonstrating leadership in urban bushland management. Of course Kings Park itself is obviously our paradigm example of what can be done in an urban setting. Again, we find that no money has been given to this. The BGPA budget has been increased by around \$10 million, and we looked at that thinking, “Hooray for urban bushland”. But, of course, most of that is just the capital needed to upgrade Fraser’s Restaurant so that the Queen can enjoy the circumstances to which she is accustomed; therefore, none of that funding will be spent on urban bushland—an enormous disappointment.

In that context, I want to throw a question to the government: why on earth did the Barnett government scrap the Saving our Species program that Labor put in place? Saving our Species was not an exercise in political point scoring. It was a \$15 million biodiversity rescue program, which had obvious relevance to the sorts of things I have described as topics covered in that urban bushland conference. Initially, it was set up as a finite program for review at the end of its initial couple of years. The DEC website describes the Saving our Species program, with that specific headline objective, as a biodiversity rescue program, designed to boost the conservation of Western Australia’s unique plants, animals and ecosystems by tackling key conservation issues for which significant long-term results can be achieved from a short-term strategic focus.

**Hon Liz Behjat:** What are you quoting from?

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** This is from the DEC website. If the member googles “Saving our Species: DEC”, she will find it. I hope she is not going to ask me to table my iPad!

Obviously that program had a very concrete relevance to the management of Bush Forever sites. We had \$15 million over two years. That is the sort of money we should be looking at now, yet the government has replaced it with dieback measures. However, we were able to show in the budget last week that all the dieback measures it was trumpeting so very loudly would fund two staff for four years. That is its total investment in extra dieback funding. Why scrap a program like that; why not keep it and, if necessary, target it specifically to the 287 Bush Forever sites? I tell members that this will become a real problem for the government. We were told last week in the estimates hearings that DEC has management responsibility for all these 287 sites. Only a proportion of them are currently vested in DEC—the ones DEC has up-front responsibility for—but, ultimately, DEC has responsibility for all of them. A number of sites currently under the auspices of the Western Australian Planning Commission are being transferred to DEC for direct hands-on management. The obvious question was: what extra resources are being made available for the management of these extra sites? The answer was none—no extra people, no extra equipment and no extra money. It simply cannot be done; it does not compute. From where will the government take the money to provide the management for 287 sites? Something has to go. Even if the minister had tried to persuade us that the management of Bush Forever sites was more important than program X, Y or Z, at least we could have a discussion about that. But, no, the government has said, “Yes, we want to have management plans for all 287 Bush Forever sites, but, no, we are not devoting a single cent of additional money to that management.” It is just a nonsense. We will keep asking the government questions about how it will do it, because the government cannot do it in the way that it has set itself up to do it at the moment.

The challenge that the government has created for itself is that all Bush Forever sites are now legally defined. That is what the government has done with the metropolitan region scheme amendment and state planning policy 2.8. The question is: from where will the government provide the resources to manage those sites and to maintain their conservation values, because we cannot have one without the other? The government will be going around in an ever-decreasing circle, while the sites that the government has now legally defined as Bush Forever sites will be degraded. The government will have to stump up the dollars, the bodies on the ground and the equipment to maintain those conservation values.

Obviously, a couple of points of the iceberg become apparent when we start talking about the problems that this government has with the protection and management of Bush Forever sites. Hon Alison Xamon referred to a couple of those problems when she moved the motion. In my remaining time, I will refer to one of them in particular—the highly topical and extremely problematic subject of the Roe 8 extension. The government knows

that what it has saddled itself with is essentially a road to nowhere. With the deletion of the Fremantle eastern bypass, it is a road to nowhere. This road will essentially act like a funnel to channel the problem somewhere else. What is the plan? Is the plan to take all the traffic out of Liberal electorates and put it in Labor electorates? That is what it looks like at the moment. I am quite protective of and quite defensive about the noodle nation plan that became infamous when Barry Jones designed a visual diagrammatic representation of the knowledge nation, which then became affectionately known as noodle nation. The government has come out with its own noodle nation. Has it looked at the plans for the Roe 8 extension that it has posted on the website? I have never seen anything so farcical. What has the government tried to do? It seems as though it has tried to say that it has heard the community and that it has worked out that community members actually quite like the Beeliar wetlands. The community loves the wetlands, so the government has finally heard that message. It is not just on Saturdays and Sundays that people cannot get into the car parks there; it is packed on any day of the week. The only way for people to get there is to cycle there; then they can get an ice-cream and sit down by the lake. People use that area every day of the week in exactly the way that I described at the beginning of my contribution; they go there to recharge and to remind themselves that they can live in an urban environment and still find a place that is peaceful and beautiful and in a natural state. It seems that this is what has happened with the government's thinking. It was initially hoping that the community would say, "Sure; cool. Blow the bushland; we'd rather have a road." But that is not the case. The community has been absolutely unremitting in its campaign to have the government's ears unblocked on the way it feels about that bushland.

What has the government done? It has gone back to the planners and said that it has a problem; it has to keep the bushland there so that its original plan to drive a six or eight-lane highway through it will not fly. Instead, it will turn the road into a flyover; it has put it up on stilts. It has circles and loops and it looks like the flight path over John F. Kennedy International Airport. I just do not know how the government thinks that will work. Underneath it is one of the most precious Bush Forever sites, one of the last remaining urban wetland areas in the metropolitan area, and the government wants to turn it into some kind of spaghetti junction. It is an absolute disgrace. The government should have the guts to can it and move on. We would even invite government members to have a glass of champagne down there to celebrate the fact that the government has finally seen sense and has scrapped this ridiculous plan.

I want to indicate a way forward, because, as I have said, there is a negative imputation in the motion. So I want to end on a positive note by suggesting to the government that there might be a way forward. I want to make three suggestions. Firstly, we need to seriously consider the possibility of changing the way that we assess any development proposal that involves the destruction of native vegetation for urban development. My suggestion is—I would like to hear the government's response to this—that we look at a mechanism for assessing those proposals in the same way as all other proposals are assessed, by removing the current exemption for proposals that have been considered under the Planning and Development Act. What would that cost us? Surely it would cost us only by slowing down the destruction of some of that precious native vegetation in the metropolitan area. Secondly, if the government really wanted to move ahead on this, it could look at some kind of incentive for bushland and wetland protection programs. It could look at extending the bush-care programs that are already in place. That is what I would like to hear the government talk about. Finally, I remind the government that it was a core election promise to give a legislative basis to bioregional planning through a biodiversity conservation act. It promised that in 2008. We have seen nothing of it so far.

**HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan)** [3.47 pm]: I want to speak in favour of this motion and also in support of the comments made by the previous speaker. That is exactly the direction in which we want to go with this issue. We definitely want to see some more funding for bushland and some proper management of what the government has done so very well to put into the Bush Forever amendment.

First of all, I stress, as did the previous speakers, the importance of the biodiversity we have in Western Australia. We know that Western Australia is globally significant for its biodiversity; I think that is universally acknowledged. Over half of Australia's biodiversity hot spots are in WA, and the South West is internationally recognised for its biodiversity. But we know that this resource is under threat. One of the first things I did as an elected member was attend the briefing from the Auditor General on his report released in June 2009 titled "Rich and Rare: Conservation of Threatened Species". It was a damning report of our failure to stop the growing extinction rate. I will quote from the Auditor General's report, because he took the time to identify what we needed to do to do better. It states —

... DEC is not effectively protecting and recovering threatened species. The number of threatened species is rising and only a few species are improving. Recovery action is not happening for most threatened species. The majority of resources and effort are allocated to critically endangered species, placing vulnerable and endangered species at risk of further decline.

The Auditor General's findings state that 601 species in Western Australia are listed as threatened with extinction and the number is increasing. In 2008 there were 601 species. By 2010, the number of species had increased to 611. I will not list everything that the Auditor General stated. I know that many members have seen this report because we have talked about it frequently. I am happy to provide a copy for any members who have not seen it. The report pointed out that although the creation of reserves is a key habitat conservation mechanism, less than half the amount of land agreed under the national target has been reserved in Western Australia. On average it takes a decade for acquired land to become a reserve. This highlights the fact that we need to preserve what we already have, such as the remnant bush that Hon Sally Talbot talked about. I think the government took a good step in the right direction by introducing Bush Forever. When the Auditor General released that report in 2009, the decline of endangered species was continuing. In fact, altogether 6 812 hectares of bushland in the Perth metropolitan area was cleared, just between 2001 and 2009. As a member for the South Metropolitan Region, I have seen much of this clearing. We often talk about the major industrial development Latitude 32. That will clear a lot of bushland. The Beeliiar wetlands is under threat from development, as is, most recently, the area near Jandakot Airport. Hon Robin Chapple and I were guests of General Electric, which has established a very good factory on what was a Bush Forever site in Jandakot. GE will train people and it will be a very important addition to our economy, but the cost is, I think, too great. In the Jandakot area we lost 220 hectares of high-quality remnant bushland of which 167 hectares was banksia woodland and we have heard that that is a Carnaby's black cockatoo habitat. Carnaby's black cockatoos are under threat and one problem is that it is death by a thousand cuts. With many pieces of bushland being developed for various reasons, no-one seems to be looking at the overall impact on species such as the Carnaby's black cockatoo, which need a large range to forage. Their habitat is unfortunately rapidly decreasing to the extent that the latest group trying to save a species from extinction is the Cockatoo Coalition. Forty grand spider orchids and four glossy-leafed hammer orchids were identified in that area of Jandakot bushland. The decision to clear that bushland was made before all the flora and fauna surveys had been completed, so we know only that there were at least four glossy-leafed hammer orchids. I will not go into the details of the loss that we have suffered due to the clearing of that Jandakot bushland. All members need do is visit Jandakot and if they ever went there before, they will see the devastation that has since occurred.

I welcome the motion before us today, although it has been a long time in coming to debate it. However, there is no time like the present to start saving some bush. Urgent action is clearly needed to protect our bushlands. It is clear that the current legislation is completely inadequate and I think that this motion goes some way in identifying three ways in which we can act now to protect our bushland by not only designating it as Bush Forever, but also actively protecting it. We know that Bush Forever sites continue to be trampled under Perth's ever increasing metropolitan footprint. This should not be left only to the Department of Environment and Conservation; the Department of Planning, the Department of State Development and the Department of Water—everyone who ever uses our natural resources—need to take this on board as priority number one because it is not our right to cause the extinction of an animal or plant.

A number of the Bush Forever sites in the South Metropolitan Region are currently under threat, highlighting the urgent need for their statutory protection. I will talk a bit about Beeliiar wetlands, Point Peron and Paganoni Swamp, which is a good news story. We know that the Roe Highway stage 8 extension is marching ahead in plans to destroy the long list of valuable assets that this state has in the Beeliiar wetlands. Already, more than 80 per cent of the wetlands on the Swan coastal plain have been destroyed and even those valuable wetlands that remain are still under threat. It is a serious concern and one that should take our utmost attention. Beeliiar wetlands is a network of wetlands that includes North Lake, Bibra Lake and Roe Swamp. It is a sanctuary for wildlife. I encourage members to visit it because it showcases outstanding biodiversity. South Metro Connect, which has put out its public environmental review documents, has documented all the biodiversity that we are about to lose if that road goes through, and I will mention a few. There is a range of endangered species, including the Carnaby's black cockatoo, southern brown bandicoot, graceful sun moth, lined skink, hooded plover, peregrine falcon, king spider orchid, spotless crane and the buff-banded rail. Members may not be familiar with these animals, plants, birds and crawling things. In fact, South Metro Connect identified one centipede that had never been seen before; it does not even know what the name of it is.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Hon Michael Mischin calls me a graceful sun moth all the time!

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** That is valid.

**Hon Col Holt:** Are you saying that we're going to lose all those if that road goes through?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** I am saying that we will lose a huge chunk of habitat for all those species and that some will be threatened. Some species, such as the southern brown bandicoot, need to be protected from the construction. People will try to put fences up so that the bandicoots are not run over by bulldozers, but certainly that habitat will be lost. In some cases, such as that of the graceful sun moth, which is critically endangered, we may lose the species. However, I remind members that this wetland area identified for a road is recognised

through its inclusion in Bush Forever site 244. Did I say “Bush Forever site”? Yes, Bush Forever site 244. The Environmental Protection Authority has argued that any road alignment through this area would be rejected as it severs the linkages between wetlands resulting in serious biodiversity impacts. Despite its recognised value, this area is threatened by the proposed Roe Highway stage 8 extension. I loved the notion brought up by Hon Sally Talbot that basically this government may be filtering traffic from Liberal seats into Labor seats. I thought that was hilarious. In fact, it makes the most sense of any suggestion that I have heard so far about the reason for that road!

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** It’s not a bad idea!

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** It may be an idea that was thought of so long ago that the member might not even remember what the basis of the road was. It was based on a plan in the 1950s—does the member remember?

**Hon Simon O’Brien** interjected.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** I do not think that Hon Simon O’Brien remembers the 50s.

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** No, I wasn’t around in the 50s, unlike Hon Robin Chapple, who was voting then! He was out protesting somewhere.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** The point is that this antiquated design has no role to play in solving our transport problems in 2011; this is not 1950. This is one of the last wetlands of high biodiversity value on the Swan coastal plain, yet we still trudge on with the old idea that it would really be better if it was covered in cement and asphalt so that we can roll our cars over it. I think not. The road should never have been planned in the first place. Our urban planning has gone far beyond the need for that road. Really, the departments and the ministers need to catch up and do something different.

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** In the local paper the other day—I think it was the *Cockburn Gazette*—there was a picture of Hon Ken Travers and Hon Kate Doust on the front page, and Hon Ken Travers was agreeing that Roe Highway did need to extend west of Kwinana Freeway so that it would serve Fiona Stanley Hospital at Murdoch. Did you see that?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** I saw that there is a counter-suggestion that a link be put in to Fiona Stanley Hospital from Roe 7, which we might say might be considered the beginning of the Roe 8 extension. The minister mentioned Fiona Stanley Hospital. That is the other big clearing that has occurred in the South Metropolitan Region. I do not have the figure in front of me for the exact number of hectares. Does the minister remember how many hectares of bush were cleared for Fiona Stanley Hospital? Tremendous offsets were required for that, and it would be good to get an update on where those offsets were. But, yes, I did see that article.

Paganoni Swamp is a good news story; so I am mixing a bit of good with the bad. Paganoni Swamp was a valuable wetland that was threatened by the idea of a development. I think they were talking about a transit-oriented development—I think it was the City of Kwinana, but it might have been the City of Rockingham. That clearly demonstrated how our system is failing our rare and threatened wildlife. Paganoni Swamp is Bush Forever site 395. That site was proposed to be rezoned urban in the draft south metropolitan and Peel subregional structure plan to support Karnup train station. The first anyone heard of this proposal was when the Friends of Paganoni Swamp heard about it. As Hon Sally Talbot has mentioned, there are a lot of people in the community who care a lot about their local bushland.

**Hon Helen Morton:** They do excellent work.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Yes, they do excellent work. They actually saw a tiny four-point caption on a map in this structure plan that flagged the possible rezoning of prime conservation land on the north-west corner of Paganoni Swamp. This would have resulted in the destruction of 48 hectares of what was one of the most significant conservation reserves in the South Metropolitan Region. Why somebody would think that was a good idea in the first place I do not know. The area was subject to rezoning buffers. It is a high conservation value wetland and consists mainly of tuart woodland, of which less than 30 per cent remains on the Swan coastal plain. Furthermore, it is home to a number of rare and endangered species, including Carnaby’s black cockatoo and the chuditch.

**Hon Phil Edman** interjected.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** No, but Hon Phil Edman would be aware that there was a sun moth near Point Peron.

After more than two years of ardent lobbying by the Friends of Paganoni Swamp, the Minister for Planning advised in December 2010 that the entire area would now be reserved in the metropolitan region scheme for parks and recreation. Our valuable bushland remnants should not need to rely on the vigilance of our local voluntary conservation groups to ensure their protection. However, it was very good that this group was able to

save that bushland and that the minister responded so proactively to do that. That was a very good outcome for that Bush Forever area, and hopefully we can keep that land as Bush Forever.

Point Peron is another area that is under threat. That is a long stretch of land at the southern end of Cockburn Sound. It is a very popular place for families and social gatherings. Generations of Western Australian schoolchildren will be familiar with the camps at Point Peron.

**Hon Alison Xamon:** I used to go there!

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Yes. Are there any members in this chamber who did not go to Point Peron as a child? It would probably be just people like me who did not grow up in Western Australia. It is amazing how many people have childhood memories and a connection with that area. However, these memories are in danger of remaining just memories, because a land grab is proposed, with the building of a canal—a canal that will cut into the peninsula—for a marina, and luxury housing, in what is a public reserve.

**Hon Norman Moore:** What about social housing? Would that be all right?

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** I do not believe there is a plan for social housing there, Leader of the House. I have never seen any social housing on that plan. Plans are on the cards for 77 hectares of land to be used to build a private canal marina precinct. I believe that at one point it was called a tourist precinct, and it then became just a marina. I am not sure what the private–public partnership is going to deliver in that area. But one thing it will deliver is the clearing of bushland habitat and the devastation forever of what was vested in this state government to be a parks and recreation reserve. The development will consist, apparently, of private residential housing, and a marina with a capacity for up to 500 vessels.

**Hon Phil Edman** interjected.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Correct me if I am wrong, Hon Phil Edman, but the proposal will require that 44 hectares of publicly owned crown land near the entrance to Point Peron be excised from the Rockingham Lakes Regional Park. That will include approximately 35 hectares of land from the Bush Forever protection area.

**Hon Phil Edman:** It is just degraded land.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Did we actually classify degraded land as Bush Forever?

**Hon Phil Edman:** You would know that it is degraded, and that there are built facilities already there, Hon Lynn MacLaren. But we can all hold hands and sing *Kumbaya* if you want; there is no problem with that at all.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Do we now have to review the Bush Forever areas and find all the degraded land and make it into a marina?

**Hon Alison Xamon:** The bushland groups would be very interested to hear the contempt with which you view urban bushland, Hon Phil Edman! I certainly hope you are not intending to hand over any big Lotterywest cheques, and grinning and getting your face in the paper on the one hand, and, on the other hand, making comments like that in this place! You do not get to have it both ways!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm):** Members, there is only one and a half minutes remaining for motions on notice. Let the member complete her speech, please.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Thank you, Mr Deputy President. It is my understanding that the very valuable bushland at Point Peron will be sold and cleared for private multistorey apartments and canal-side residences, a private marina, a hotel or resort with a maximum height of five storeys, shops and car parks. That is not what we would hope that this government, or any government, would envisage for a Bush Forever site. The proposal will require the clearing of 38 hectares of bushland, including 31 hectares of Bush Forever land. It is also likely to lead to an indirect loss of vegetation through the altered groundwater levels and/or quality. I want to quote from the draft environmental scoping document for the project.

**Hon Norman Moore:** You are quoting from your speech, which you are reading.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Which I typed out on this piece of paper.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** You read beautifully! Go on.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** Thank you.

**Hon Norman Moore:** If you are going to quote from your own speech, that is fine.

**Hon LYNN MacLAREN:** This is from the draft environmental scoping document. Would members like to hear what the draft environmental scoping document says?

**Hon Phil Edman:** When the marina is completed, I will take you for a spin! Too late—ding!

**Extract from *Hansard***

[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 22 June 2011]

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Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Lynn MacLaren

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**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Members, noting the time, we will move to consideration of committee reports.  
Debate adjourned, pursuant to temporary orders.