

**SPORTING GROUNDS SHORTAGE — SOUTHERN RIVER ELECTORATE**

*Grievance*

**MR P. ABETZ (Southern River)** [9.29 am]: My grievance is directed to the Minister for Planning. It relates to the desperate shortage of sportsgrounds in the electorate of Southern River and surrounding areas. It is a very new area in terms of land development, and all new subdivisions need to set aside 10 per cent for public open space, but that is being set aside for parks and for passive recreation, and we have a desperate need for more active recreation areas. The difficulty is that a lot of the schools and the council have combined their facilities on the one site so that council ovals equal school ovals, which is a very wise use of land and I have no problems with that at all. However, it simply means that insufficient sportsgrounds or venues are available for the junior and senior football and soccer clubs, and others, to practise on and play their games. In the 1980s, area planners set aside land for active recreation areas and two of those areas, Sutherlands Park in the City of Gosnells and Clifton Park in the City of Canning, were set aside for sports ovals. Unfortunately, the council cannot develop the Sutherlands Park land further—that is, put extra sportsgrounds on that land—because the Department of Environment and Conservation has deemed the native vegetation on that land to be of a nature that deserves to be kept. It has been zoned as Bush Forever. Clifton Park, which was designed to have two ovals, has one oval, and again the council has been told that, because of native vegetation, it will not get permission to develop a second oval.

I met with the City of Gosnells to discuss where we can put an extra sports field or two. Not far from where I live is the very large Bush Forever site 125 in Barrett Street. I think it is the largest site in the City of Gosnells. Barrett Street runs down the middle of the site; that is, it is zoned Bush Forever on both sides of the road. One large block of 4.5 hectares on the left-hand side of that area has been cleared and used for a market garden for many years. It has a bore. It is very flat ground. That site would be ideal to develop as a sports area because it has the benefit of being away from residential areas, having the buffer of Bush Forever around it—land that will never be built on—and a bitumen access road running through the site. That road will eventually be blocked off at one end and a gate could be put across the entry point, thereby keeping vandalism to a minimum.

The City of Gosnells is very enthusiastic about moving forward in this way, when the landowner eventually wants to sell. I wrote to the Minister for Planning in October last year outlining the proposal and received a reply from the minister's office saying that permission to use the land would not be granted because it is part of a Bush Forever site and the Department of Environment and Conservation plans to replant the whole of the cleared area with native vegetation. I have spoken to the people who manage the City of Gosnells' parks and recreation facilities. They say that it will take at least 20 years of careful management and planting, and massive amounts of expenditure, to bring that 4.5 hectares back to a native vegetation ecosystem. The question for many in my community is: why spend so much money on rehabilitating 4.5 hectares of market-garden lands into bush when we are so desperately short of active recreational areas? The community is asking: if it cannot clear the land at Clifton Park or at Sutherlands Park, will the department, as a trade-off, allow the community to put an oval or two on that land near Barrett Street, which was rezoned parks and recreation late last year? Zoning wise, the land fully conforms and, in a sense, all the ducks are lined up. It would be a simple, inexpensive solution that would alleviate the problem. I want to say that the community is certainly behind the issue of trying to get more sportsgrounds. The Minister for Sport and Recreation visited my electorate earlier this year. We spoke with the various sports club leaders and with people from the Cities of Gosnells and Canning. The Minister for Sport and Recreation is very aware of the problem and he said that he would do whatever he could to help, but that unless we could get the ground on which to build an oval, funding from the Department of Sport and Recreation will not help us a great deal.

Therefore, I plead with the minister to use his good office in whatever way he can to assist us in either getting permission to move in the direction of using the area in Barrett Street that has been a market garden for many years for a sportsground, or somehow finding some extra land in our area that can be used for sportsgrounds.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Planning)** [9.35 am]: As the member for Southern River indicated, the site in question is in Barrett Street, Southern River. It is Bush Forever site 125 and, as the member also indicated and as I understand, it is currently in use as a market garden. The member wrote to me in, I think, September last year to express his concern about the shortage of sportsgrounds in the Southern River and City of Gosnells area. The member is also correct in saying that this particular site has now been rezoned parks and recreation under the metropolitan region scheme.

I understand that the lot is largely cleared, and that, according to the member for Southern River, the City of Gosnells has indicated that it has no objections to the idea of exploring the possibility of using that land for a sporting ground. The land is currently in private ownership and I understand that the WA Planning Commission has been progressively acquiring properties for the purpose of consolidating the parks and recreation land

surrounding this particular site so that it can be incorporated as a conservation reserve. I also understand that the Planning Commission has recently entered into negotiations with the landowner of this site to purchase the property as it has been designated part of Bush Forever site 125.

Although the property is partially developed as a market garden, it is also an enclave within the Bush Forever site, and after the Planning Commission purchases the land, it intends to remove the market garden and rehabilitate the land to restore its full wetland function and native vegetation. From the Planning Commission's perspective, it would not be appropriate to establish sporting grounds on this particular land because the intention is to consolidate the whole of the site, including the surrounding land, as a sustainable conservation reserve that will restore and protect the regional and environmental values of the area. The problem with it being used as a sporting ground is that it would involve reticulation from groundwater and also the use of fertilisers and chemicals for turf maintenance. In addition, three boundaries of this property would adjoin bushland, creating edge effects and in particular the possibility for the encroachment of weeds from the land that might be developed as sporting grounds—as has been suggested—into the native bushland surrounding the site.

In my response to the member for Southern River's letter, I pointed out that the Planning Commission has previously acquired land for regional sporting facilities in the City of Gosnells, including what is now Tom Bateman Reserve, and it has also recently reallocated land for regional sporting facilities in Twelfth Road. This is in addition to the Champion Lakes Regional Recreation Centre, which is in the City of Armadale and which I acknowledge is mainly used for rowing and possibly canoeing activities.

**Mr P. Abetz:** But they are fully utilised already, minister.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** I will get to what may be done for the future in a moment.

These regional facilities supplement the local sporting facilities that may be developed on local open spaces created out of the subdivision process and opportunities in regional parks. I understand that officers from the Department of Planning attended a meeting on 15 February this year, less than two weeks ago, with representatives of the City of Gosnells, when several issues were discussed in an attempt to assist with the progression of planning for the Southern River district. The lot in question, lot 1606, was just one of the points of discussion at that meeting. In the meeting, I understand it was indicated there was a long-term intent to eventually close Barrett Street to enable the consolidation of the parks and recreation land.

It is acknowledged that there is currently a shortage of district open space in the locality, and that Sutherlands Park is currently at capacity. I am also advised that the City of Gosnells has identified a new district open space site in another area, which is slightly to the east of the area that the member for Southern River has identified and which is in the Southern River precinct 3 local structure plan, which was adopted by the City of Gosnells on 12 May 2009 to accommodate sporting facilities. This local structure plan was considered by the Planning Commission on 15 September 2009 and was noted as being suitable for use as a guiding document to assess future metropolitan region scheme amendments and sub-precinct outline development plans. The local structure plan shows the co-location of district open space adjacent to the high school site in precinct 3D to ensure the most efficient use of the available land.

In summary, based on the advice received—to a large extent, of course, the planning portfolio relies on advice from the environmental agencies on these issues—although there are problems on the site raised by the member, which is currently in use as a market garden, a site has been identified slightly to the east. It is in the vicinity of Phoebe and Passmore Streets in Southern River and, as I have said, has been identified for district open space and potentially sporting facilities in the future. I think that is another opportunity. It is not a great distance from the Barrett Street site—I would say probably about two kilometres or so to the south east, but certainly no more than two kilometres—and that should be available for use for the purpose that the member for Southern River is seeking. If the City of Gosnells has any additional requirements, the Department of Planning would be happy to discuss those requirements further in to future planning for the whole district.