

PINJAR SOUTH — INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Motion

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [10.06 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house calls on the Barnett government to immediately cease progressing the planning of a new industrial estate on the Gnangara mound at Pinjar south.

In November 2009 the state government released the “Industrial Land Strategy 2009: Perth and Peel”. In that strategy the government proposed six priority sites for industrial development, one of which was located at Pinjar south in the North Metropolitan Region. As members would have noticed, a little earlier this morning I tabled a petition from many of the local residents of the community of east Wanneroo opposing that development. It had some 4 500 signatures; a substantial petition by any measure, particularly compared with many of the petitions that we receive in this place.

I put on the record today that I am fundamentally opposed to the proposal for an industrial area on the land at Pinjar south because it sits upon the Gnangara mound. There are other reasons that I oppose the proposed Pinjar south industrial area. The issue raises the questions: Is the industrial area needed; and, if so, is it in the right location? Are there alternatives to meet the employment targets for Perth’s north-west corridor? Finally, is this about maximising government profit at the expense of local residents?

I turn to the first issue—namely, the fundamental issue of the protection of Gnangara mound. In 1994 a select committee of the other place, the Select Committee on Metropolitan Development and Groundwater Supplies, was formed and reported to the Parliament.

Hon Max Trenorden: It wouldn’t be any good if it was from the other house!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Max Trenorden, I must say that that committee’s report is a document that has stood the test of time—like the motions of Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich! For the past 20 years that report has provided the framework for resolving the conflicts between urban development and the need to protect the Gnangara mound. I pay credit to the members of that committee, all of whom I think became ministers after serving on that select committee, because they really did address the issue. I do not think that too many other committee reports have been used by both sides of politics as their basis for policy development over such a long period.

That select committee made a number of recommendations. It noted how lucky Western Australia was to have a resource such as the Gnangara mound and that the water on it had not been polluted at that stage. It also pointed out the need to protect that water source. The committee visited California to see what happens when groundwater supplies are polluted and it recommended a number of things that the community needed to do to resolve these issues. The committee recommended determining the boundaries of the Gnangara mound based on science, protecting that resource and, if necessary, putting into public ownership key parts of that mound so that it could be protected in perpetuity. The committee also warned that we ensure that we did not allow creep.

Recommendation 1 of that report states —

The Committee recommends that the Government move, without delay, to strengthen the legislative mechanisms which control the protection of groundwater resources.

Both major parties have done that over the past 20 years. Before I became a member of Parliament and while I was campaigning, the then Liberal government sought to resume land around Lake Pinjar to incorporate it into the area of priority 1 land as government-owned land on the Gnangara mound. Recommendation 1.3 states —

EPA’s Gnangara Mound Crown Land EPP should be amended to strengthen groundwater protection mechanisms and be compatible with DPUD’s Water Resources Policy D.C. No. 6.3

Recommendation 1.5 states —

The boundaries of the Priority zones should be fixed and immutable ...

That means that they should never be changed or mutated in any way. That recommendation was subject to the outcome of recommendation 4 —

... to review the priority area boundaries to ensure that they are based on rigorous scientific evidence ...

That has occurred in the past. Both major parties worked to establish those boundaries. Recommendation 4.5 states —

If additional land is required for catchment protection, this land should be acquired through a purchase or land swap procedure.

Again, both major parties have done that to secure the Gngangara mound and ensure that the land is in public ownership. Recommendation 4.3 states —

There should not be a reduction in the area of groundwater catchments unless the study can demonstrate that the quality and quantity of water available for drinking water supply can be maintained.

Recommendation 3.2 states —

All Government agencies should agree, when considering developments in Priority 1 areas, that protection of the groundwater resource will be given primacy over all other issues.

Recommendation 3.3 states in part —

... that strategies should be put in place by the Water Authority to ensure that a land acquisition of privately owned land program is implemented.

All those things have occurred. The introduction to recommendation 3 is absolutely critical. It states —

The Select Committee endorses the principles of Priority 1 Protection, and supports the restriction of land use in the Priority 1 area to bushland, silviculture, scientific research and passive recreation and other similar activities that present an absolute minimal risk to water quality and quantity.

Other recommendations include ensuring that we do not get incremental loss and that we provide absolute protection to the mound. Recommendation 14, which is absolutely crucial to this debate, states —

The Select Committee recommends that the Department of Planning and Urban Development adopt a policy, when dealing with development proposals outside the framework of Metroplan, —

Metroplan was the forerunner to the current planning of Perth proposals —

of ensuring the protection of groundwater supplies is not compromised by incremental decision making.

The decision that is being made and the proposal that is before us today is incremental decision making. This is about creep. No matter how it is defined, we have established the boundaries for the Gngangara mound over the past 20 years and have locked them away through legislative mechanisms. We have also introduced in the metropolitan region scheme a water protection area over the mound. We now need to ensure that there is not creep. This proposal should be opposed for that reason and that reason alone. Make no mistake, the Gngangara mound is an important part of Perth's water supply. Currently it is the largest source of water for the Perth metropolitan area. Even after the second desalination plant is constructed, the mound will provide approximately one-third of Perth's water needs. That is why it is absolutely crucial to ensure that the mound is protected. That reason alone should see the government abandon its proposal to look at establishing an industrial area on the Gngangara mound at south Pinjar. I could finish my argument at that point and say there is no need to debate it any further, because that is fundamental. We should be continuing to provide bipartisan support for the recommendations from that 1994 select committee, which, I might add, had as one of its members the current Minister for Planning. These recommendations should be well known to that minister.

Even if there were not the fundamental need to protect Gngangara mound, is this the right location for an industrial area? What are the environmental values of this area? Conservation wetlands within it and surrounding it need to be protected. It is an area with a high potential risk of being affected by acid sulfate soils. When acid sulfate soils are triggered, the plume can spread in all directions from the initial source. One has only to look at what has happened in Mirrabooka to understand that. Such a plume has the potential to impact on not only the industrial area, but also the land surrounding the north-east corridor of Wanneroo.

There are Aboriginal heritage issues to deal with. I was very fortunate to be taken by some of the local members of the Aboriginal community to visit a healing site. I consider it a great honour to have been given the privilege to visit that site. I was amazed and blown away. The healing site is not on the site of the industrial area, but it is very nearby. I have no doubt that the industrial area will have an impact on that healing site, which is of significant importance to the Nyoongah community. That is another reason why we should be opposing this proposal.

Is this industrial area needed? I did a lot of work on employment in the previous government and I understand the need for more employment along the northern corridor. We must ensure that there is sufficient land upon

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which that employment can be based. However, I am not convinced that an industrial area at south Pinjar is needed. There are many ways to achieve the requirements for industrial land in the northern suburbs. For that matter, one even has to argue whether the volume of industrial land that is proposed under the “Industrial Land Strategy 2009 Perth and Peel” is needed in the northern suburbs of Perth. It is interesting to trace the history of the development of Perth and the 1955 Stephenson report. More industrial land was reserved in the southern suburbs because that was to be a manufacturing area. That is why the Kwinana heavy industrial area is there and why we have industrial areas at Forrestfield and a range of other places, which are all interconnected by road and rail systems. The northern suburbs do not have that. Land at Wangara, Malaga and Osborne Park was set aside to provide for the service industry for the residential population. The intention was that the majority of the population in the northern suburbs would live in the northern suburbs and work in the CBD. We need to ensure that there is enough commercial land and land that can be used for employment in Alkimos and Joondalup, where we are seeing the potential loss of future employment land to residential subdivision, which will never be unwound. We have seen a constant contraction of the amount of land the state government has provided at places such as Alkimos for the purposes of employment.

Other areas within the City of Wanneroo could be converted for commercial and central business district-type purposes. We need to make sure that land zoned for industrial development in the northern corridor is used to maximise employment opportunities. Applications to site things such as Bunnings stores on industrial land are being approved by this government, as well other proposals that are very low in employment prospects and could be located elsewhere in the state or under other zonings in the northern corridor. The government needs to get its head around the hard work, not take the easy option of just drawing a bit of extra purple on a bit of land that is not suitable for the proposed uses.

There are question marks around some of the labour projections contained in the industrial land strategy and issues about the participation rates in 2031 and the types of employment that there will be. The sort of employment proposed is interesting, because one of the early issues in this debate was the inclusion of special industry within the designation; the government is now saying that that will not be the case, and that its intention was to use it only for strategic export knowledge-based industry. Strategic export knowledge-based industry could be put into a greenfield site, of which there are many in the northern corridor, and I do not know that that sort of industry would need a buffer zone. It certainly should not be put out onto the mound, because there are other options available. I have long argued that a greenfield site needs to be found in the northern corridor for a marina development similar to the Fremantle boat harbour, where the support industry could be located behind it. None of the marinas on the northern corridor have any zoned land around them, and it cannot be retrofitted into an existing urban area, but there are still greenfield sites in that area. The Perth inner core does not meet industrial land requirements, but we manage. We need to make sure that land zoned for industrial purposes is not used for other purposes to maximise profits, and I am not talking about the profits of the private individual; this is about the government trying to maximise its profit.

One of the big problems for the existing Neerabup industrial area is that there are a number of constraints on that land related to environmental values. If we got on with the job today, we could—I think it is highly possible—revegetate some of the land on the mound and put those environmental values onto that land, which is degraded at the moment, and it could, potentially, be used as an offset once we have established that we can provide the same environmental values that are being protected in the existing industrial area. We could work with Cockburn Cement, which has a large landholding in that area, to try to bring forward its mining of limestone on that land so that it frees it up for industrial purposes, because that is one of the biggest constraints; if that was resolved, we would have enough industrial land in the northern corridor.

I am very proud that when I worked for Ian Taylor, we got rid of the proposed Wilbinga and Breton Bay industrial areas to the north of Perth. At the time, that was opposed by many people in the community, but it is now accepted that it was the right decision. Why did we do that? Because we thought that it would better to move that sort of industrial development out of the Perth area, to try to decentralise Perth and encourage the growth of some of the regional centres. That is why we have places such as the Kemerton industrial estate and industrial areas such as Oakajee at Geraldton; that is why we have industrial areas at Kalgoorlie and many of the other regional centres across Western Australia. We should drive a lot of the industrial development into existing industry-zoned areas that actually want it. Bunbury has been trying to make Kemerton work for many years, and the opportunity is there to drive industrial development there to reduce some of the growth pressures on Perth, and to remove some of the demand for industrial land in the Perth metropolitan area. Those are the sort of strategies that the government should be employing now, rather than trying to creep onto the mound and take that land, which should be protected for perpetuity, for industrial purposes. Those are the strategies that should be used.

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There is no doubt in my mind that part of the drive behind this is profits and profits for government. Profits for government should not be at the expense of local residents, and the land values of local residents. I served for five years on an inquiry by a committee of this place that is well known to members of this chamber; it was about the erosion of private property and the impacts of government making decisions that blight surrounding land. I think there were a couple of areas where members of the committee disagreed, but there was almost universal agreement. I urge members to read that report and then think about what the government is doing at Pinjar south, and they will see that the government is doing exactly what that committee said not to do.

I return to the issues of Lake Pinjar. I am sure many members on the other side of the chamber know Colin Brand, who had a property on the land around Lake Pinjar and was fighting the development. One of the things he said to me was that he was concerned that this was about the government banking land on the mound so that it could sell off other bits of land for profit, and the government would make the profit rather than the local people who already owned the land. We now see that the government has resumed the land at Lake Pinjar, and now it is proposed that part of the mound will be excised and sold off by the government for profit—exactly what Colin Brand predicted 10 or 15 years ago. We are constantly seeing the removal of possible employment land across the northern corridor by groups such as LandCorp because residential land will maximise its profits at the expense of employment land, but that will not actually provide a good, long-term, sustainable outcome. We need a government that will focus on that, because there is no doubt that there has been complete hypocrisy.

In conclusion, a number of the studies were commenced under the Labor Party, but we never proposed an industrial area on the Gnangara mound. I want to assure the community of the east Wanneroo area—many of whom are in the public gallery today, and I thank them for coming to this place—that the Labor Party will stand alongside them and fight this proposal. I will continue to fight this proposal for as long as it stays on the books. I hope it will come off the books sooner rather than later, but if it does not, I will fight this issue up to the next election and beyond, if necessary, because it is bad for Western Australia and the east Wanneroo area.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The PRESIDENT: Order! We always welcome interest from the public gallery, but you cannot actually participate in the debate from the public gallery; you are limited to observing the debate, but welcome anyhow.

HON MICHAEL MISCHIN (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.27 am]: I speak against the motion on behalf of the government, on the basis that it is misconceived, and, in the way it is framed, premature.

I appreciate and share Hon Ken Travers' concern about the Gnangara mound and the amenity of the area in the North Metropolitan Region as a fellow member representing that region in this place. I also have a concern about the improvement of employment opportunities in the North Metropolitan Region, and the recognition that that will encourage greater facility for local residents to obtain employment in a variety of areas, and also relieve the pressure on freeway travel, amongst other things.

We are dealing with, in Hon Ken Travers' usual passionate way, a number of assumptions not based on fact. He mentioned that the motivation behind the industrial land strategy is that of profit for government and the like, but that is not quite the case—it is not the case at all. If one bothered to read the Minister for Planning's foreword in the industrial land strategy 2009 paper—the public document that was circulated and has been the subject of public comment—one would see that the purpose of the strategy is to identify areas of potential industrial development, not for heavy industry but for light and general industry uses, that are underutilised in Perth at the moment to overcome the problems that were experienced in the last decade during the course of the boom, when there was a dearth of any industrial area available to exploit the potential of that boom. It is the first strategy of its kind to be done and something that was neglected by the last government.

Hon Ken Travers: It was started by the last government.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The state government is conducting a review of appropriate land use locations across the Perth and the Peel areas for medium and long-term use. We are talking of a strategy for about the next 20 years. It is comprehensive work and a necessary job, and it had not been undertaken by the previous government.

The strategy was released for public comment—I stress for public comment. It is not a final strategy; it is not planning anything in particular. It is simply putting forward areas that can be used and that have the potential to be used for light and general industrial purposes in the Perth and the Peel regions. It is there for public comment and has been there for public comment. The original date for the receipt of submissions was set for 12 March this year. An extension was granted to 31 March following five public information sessions being conducted throughout the Perth and the Peel regions from late February to early March. One of something like 30 potential sites was that at south Pinjar, along with many other locations in this draft strategy. The site is located on the

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corner of the old Yanchep road and Neaves Road. The strategy has highlighted that site, which is government-owned land—it is owned by the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Planning—as a potential priority site.

A total of 473 valid submissions have been received by the Department of Planning regarding the industrial land strategy. The majority of those submissions relate to the site in south Pinjar—something like 278 submissions. The objections relating to it focus on several points: the location of the site as a priority 1 public drinking water supply area that is part of the Gnangara water mound; the traffic impact from potential 24-hour operations on the site; the perception that the government is making a profit from an environmentally sensitive area, which appears to have been Hon Ken Travers' assumption, that that is the sole reason for the investigation of the site; health impacts from potential toxic activities occurring on the site; and the devaluing of nearby residential areas and the impact on the general amenity in the area. The community objection has been driven primarily by a group known as the Clearwater Revival East Wanneroo action group, or CREW, which is the acronym it uses. A primary concern about, and objection to, the nomination of the site for future industrial use by that group was the mention of special industry as a potential preferred use. I can say that that has now been removed from the draft industrial land strategy that is currently being prepared.

In discussions with the Department of Water and by cross-referencing the Pinjar site against the Gnangara sustainability strategy, it was considered that the most appropriate course of action on the part of the government was to further investigate the feasibility of developing that land for employment-generating uses. The majority of the site is directly affected by an area defined as a priority 1 public drinking water supply area. By way of explanation, a priority 1 area bears the most stringent of Department of Water drinking water categories. It recommends only very low contamination risk activities on overlying land. There are two other categories, that of priority 2 and priority 3, which allow for increasingly relaxed limitations on land use. Priority 3 does support urban and industrial land uses.

The government agrees that the Gnangara water mound must be preserved and protected. The mound is the primary low-cost water supply source for Perth. However, it is also important to note that in the Gnangara sustainability strategy, the south Pinjar area is clearly identified for potential future employment-generating land use. I stress “potential” because no final decision has been made. No planning is going ahead, as the motion seems to contemplate. The Gnangara sustainability strategy recommends that the risks and benefits of potential urban and employment-generating land uses be considered by investigating the feasibility of changing some of the priority 1 areas to a priority 3 area or amending the boundary of the Gnangara water mound.

The Department of Water and the Department of Planning are undertaking studies, investigations and assessments to determine the feasibility of locating employment uses in that area of south Pinjar and whether the boundaries of the mound should be redefined and some parts of the mound re-categorised from priority 1 to priority 3. It is all very well to talk about a study that was done in 1994, but science moves on and things change. The Department of Water and the Department of Planning are looking into the issue of whether some of that area strictly needs to be a priority 1 area. The outcomes of that study are not going to be known until late next year or early the following year. As part of the preparation of the final industrial land strategy, an implementation plan has also been prepared that details the planning and environmental studies and the associated costs that would need to be undertaken to ascertain the feasibility of developing any priority sites for industrial development—that is, priority sites generally as well as the south Pinjar one—in the medium to long term. The Department of Planning is working closely with the Department of Water on this issue, and no final decision has been made.

The purpose of the industrial land strategy document that has been the subject of comment is really one of being able to identify priority sites, to determine the feasibility of using them and to balance environmental and other amenity issues against the need to plan the future for adequate industrial land in the Perth and Peel areas. It is true that the south Pinjar site is currently subject to a priority 1 water use designation, but there is a question about the true extent of the Gnangara mound and whether it all needs to be classified as priority 1. The environmental sensitivity of the location, as with all potential locations that are identified in the industrial land strategy, will be subject to extremely rigorous environmental assessments. The industrial land use strategy is still under development, and it is irresponsible, in the government's view, to inflame fears about specific locations until a final strategy is determined. I should stress that this document has been open to public comment. I have already identified that there has been considerable public interest in it and comment on it. It would be idle to suggest that it is being ignored by the government and those responsible for the formulation of the final strategy.

Finally, the government will make a decision on the site based on its merits and taking into consideration all the relevant factors, whether they be environmental, economic or community. Therefore, the motion should be rejected.

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HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.38 am]: I am very pleased to support the motion moved by Hon Ken Travers and to add my comments to the call that the Barnett government should immediately cease progress in the planning of the new industrial estate on the Gngangara mound at south Pinjar. What an extraordinary response from the government we have just heard from Hon Michael Mischin. He started off by saying that in his view the motion moved by Hon Ken Travers is misconceived and premature. I will tell the honourable member something: some people in the public gallery have made their presence felt today. They are an excellent community group. They are one of the most passionate groups of people and committed groups of activists that I have come across in all these years of working with environmental activists. The people in the gallery today are some of the members of the Clearwater Revival East Wanneroo —

Hon Giz Watson: What a good name!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is a wonderful name, is it not? Hon Giz Watson is of a generation that will remember Clearwater Revival! One of its leaders is Councillor Glynis Monks, who has done a very fine job, along with the group's other leadership, of bringing people to Parliament today to hear this debate. If Hon Michael Mischin truly believes the words that he has just put on the record in this place that this motion is misconceived and premature, I invite him to meet this group of people with me and Hon Ken Travers after this debate is finished.

Hon Michael Mischin: That does not have anything to do with whether the motion is misconceived.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will come to the rest of what the member said in a minute. If he believes that the motion of Hon Ken Travers is misconceived and premature, he should talk to the people who have done a mountain of research on this issue and hear what they have to say about the terms in which this motion has been put.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hansard is very good at interpreting all sorts of things and creating fantastic speeches, but Hansard cannot interpret two or three people at the same time.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Michael Mischin went on to say that we should all read the industrial land strategy. All members of the government should know that there is a group of people sitting on this side of the house and there is a group of people sitting in the public gallery at the moment who know every word of that ILS and can quote it section by section and tell members exactly where its premises are misconceived. The member should not stand in this place and make comments about issues of this kind when there is such enormous community concern. People are willing to do all this work; all these people are volunteers. They do not have armies of public servants writing these reports, but they have taken the time to come to Parliament today to listen to us raise the matter in this chamber.

Hon Michael Mischin went on to say—I think this was possibly the most insulting part of his 15-minute contribution to the debate—“I don't know what they're worrying about.”

Hon Michael Mischin: I didn't say that.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: He said, “It's only a list. What are they getting so excited about?”

Point of Order

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I do not have a problem with rhetoric. What I do have a problem with is being misquoted. I did not say that.

The PRESIDENT: Hon Michael Mischin, there are a couple of courses of action that you can follow. You can make that point at an appropriate time during the debate or you can seek a retraction.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I think I have made my point, Mr President.

Motion Resumed

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I think Hon Michael Mischin actually used the word “overreaction”. He said that it was an overreaction from the members of Clearwater Revival East Wanneroo. I do not really know what is going on there. I have never heard such an extraordinary put-down of a concern that is so deeply seated in the community. I have never heard such a cavalier dismissal of a wave of community sentiment of this magnitude. Along with many other things that the member is doing at the moment, this will come back to bite him in a place where it hurts. I repeat my offer to Hon Michael Mischin, and please bring some colleagues: he should meet some of these people after this debate and let them explain to him how wrong he has got it.

Hon Ken Travers began this debate by presenting a petition to the house. More than 4 500 people signed the petition essentially supporting the motion that Hon Ken Travers has moved today. More than 4 500 people, Hon Michael Mischin, are acting in a way that is premature and misconceived, and are essentially somehow irresponsibly raising fears. What an absolute nonsense! What a travesty of process this is!

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I want to make a couple of substantive points. As the shadow minister for both environment and planning, I have taken a particular interest in this issue. It just shows how important it is to bring those two crucial portfolios together. I am beginning to think that I have an ally on the other side of this house, not from the most likely place and certainly not in the Minister for Environment, who seems to take an extraordinarily contrary position on all the arguments I raise. I noted last week that an ex-colleague of mine—in fact, he is still a colleague of mine, because he works at the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University, where I still maintain some academic connections—Peter McMahon, published a paper. He wrote the paper in 2009 and that is when I first read it. It is an excellent paper called “A WA2020 Project Special Report”. Dr McMahon has put together a very comprehensive historical survey about the economic and social development of Western Australia. I commend it to every member of this house, and I am happy to provide copies. I am sure that Dr McMahon would be very happy to meet with anyone who is interested in discussing his ideas further. All credit to Dr McMahon because it is very hard to get some media coverage of these complex ideas, but he succeeded last week. These are the sorts of headlines that his report produced: “WA is worst on pollution” from *The Sunday Times* and “State is ‘unsustainable’” from *The West Australian*. The initial introductory paragraph in the article in *The West Australian* is very telling. It states —

WA is one of the least sustainable societies in the world, according to a new report from Murdoch University.

I do not have time to go into any of the substance of Dr McMahon’s report, but I will read into *Hansard* his final conclusion, which I think is very telling. It expresses a sentiment that we need to have front and centre of our minds when we debate a motion such as this. My question to the house is: have we learnt nothing from the past? Have we learnt nothing from our environmental, economic and social catastrophes such as Wittenoom and the debacle in Capel a couple of decades ago, with which I am sure other members for the South West Region will be familiar, as will you, Mr President? Essentially, all the landfill in Capel had to be cleared because it was shown to be radioactive because tailings from the mines were being used. When are we going to learn? When are we going to start adopting the precautionary principle on protecting areas? Hon Ken Travers has given a very eloquent summary of the myriad issues that come into play on an issue such as the Gngangara mound and the Pinjar south proposed development. It is not just about environmental issues; it is about issues of heritage, water use and the value that we place on water. I want to tell members how Dr McMahon’s report concludes. It states —

The history of European settlement in WA has left some serious problems, some of which are about to go critical. A tendency towards ‘boom and bust’ exploitation of natural resources as a core driver of the state’s economy has left some Western Australians and foreign investors very rich, but otherwise a highly questionable socio-economic legacy. It has resulted in both environmental problems that are reaching a point of criticality and social imbalances that should not be tolerated in a modern society.

I found myself with an ally in the shape, surprisingly enough, of Hon Peter Collier, who went to the trouble of providing a response to Dr McMahon’s report. I can only say that I agree with Hon Peter Collier entirely. I hope that this is a sentiment that he will express around the cabinet table and in his party forums. Western Australians have been living in a fool’s paradise for too long. That is the key. When it comes to an issue such as the Gngangara mound and Pinjar south, we need to put that sentiment into practice.

HON ALISON XAMON (East Metropolitan) [10.49 am]: The Greens (WA) will be supporting this motion, and I thank Hon Ken Travers for bringing it on for debate. It is very important and timely that we discuss this matter in the house. I recognise that this issue has many facets. Hon Ken Travers did a good job in covering the breadth of concerns that arise from this proposal. I will focus particularly on the issue of water and water use. My colleague Hon Giz Watson will hopefully also get an opportunity to speak. It will be no surprise to members of this place that the Greens and I are very concerned about what is happening with the Gngangara mound. This coming summer is already shaping up to be very grim for the mound, with the distinct possibility of a record extraction of water from the mound. I note that we are still waiting for the Gngangara sustainability strategy to be released. The Minister for Water has been sitting on this strategy for far too long. I am very concerned to make sure that it is brought on as soon as possible, as these issues exist pretty much in a vacuum until that occurs. The Gngangara mound has experienced years of neglect. It has reached a critical point. Some firm action needs to be taken. The Gngangara mound is absolutely vital as a source of Perth’s drinking water and also as a water source for the many wetlands throughout Yanchep, Pinjar and Wanneroo. The minister has acknowledged, and as the Gngangara groundwater areas allocation plan states, that the water is now almost fully allocated.

The protection of drinking water source areas delivers substantive economic returns by protecting natural vegetation, fire management regimes, the quality of water entering the lakes and wetlands of the Swan coastal plain, current and future drinking water protection measures, possible managed aquifer recharge schemes, and the many self-supply bores through the Gngangara mound area for stock and livestock, horticulture, viticulture

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and market gardens. These areas also provide a water source for groundwater-dependent vegetation and ecosystems, including our Bush Forever areas. Since 1979 our groundwater volume storage has reduced by 700 gegalitres. This reduction is already contributing to the acidification of wetlands and the risk of capital economic loss through groundwater bores being regarded as stranded assets. Our underground drinking water resources are protected from unsuitable land uses by state planning policy 2.2, “Gnangara Groundwater Protection”, and the Gnangara underground water pollution control area is proclaimed under the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act 1909. Water supplies are also governed by state planning policy 2.7, “Public Drinking Water Source”, and state planning policy 2.9, “Water Resources”. Water source protection areas are classified as either P1, P2 or P3, with an emphasis on land-use planning to protect water resources from contamination from biochemical processes, industrial pollution, groundwater draw-down or human activity through intense development. The Department of Planning regards the protection of groundwater as a primary consideration for the future of the east Wanneroo area. The Gnangara sustainability strategy report, “Summary of Land Use Planning Investigations”, regards this state planning policy as a —

... constraint to development over the P1 and P2 areas but investigations indicate that sensitive and compatible land use changes could occur whilst maintaining groundwater quality.

It is important that we talk about what are compatible land-use changes. The GSS report states that civil engineering solutions could direct all stormwater away from P1 and P2 areas. Importantly, it says that we need to look at water-sensitive urban design measures and planning restrictions on land use and development. It states that state planning policy 2.2 will need to be reviewed, including for changes to the boundaries of the P1 and P2 areas. But if we go down the path of changing the P1 and P2 boundaries, contamination of groundwater is much more likely to occur. The P1 category is designed to avoid degradation of the water source by preventing the development of potentially harmful activities. In this instance, risk avoidance is the guiding principle. The P2 category seeks to ensure that there is no increased risk of pollution to the water source, with the principle being risk minimisation. The principle behind the P3 category is to manage the risk of contamination to the water source. P3 areas are declared over land where water supply sources need to coexist with other land uses, such as residential, commercial and light industrial developments. A clear management strategy should separate our drinking water sources from potentially harmful contamination practices.

This government is showing an alarming lack of interest in tackling pollution problems at their source. Instead, it seems to be relying on very expensive engineering solutions to fix the problems later on down the track. A classic example of this is the Anvil Way stormwater sump. A huge amount of infrastructure is being put in to try to address pollution issues. Far too little is being done to address the sources of pollution in the first place. We know that taking large areas away from P1 and P2 protection will reduce the amount of water available to the integrated water supply scheme. Nearby Water Corporation bore schemes contribute to the IWSS. Changing the P1 and P2 boundaries will also result in the need for very expensive water treatment to protect the population from potential contamination. It will also reduce the flexibility available to the Water Corporation to adapt its water abstraction strategy. Having many areas from which the Water Corporation can extract water allows the impact of water abstractions to be timed. Importantly, it means that abstractions can occur around the entire area of the groundwater mound, which has the effect of limiting the impact on wetlands and banksia bushland. P1 and P2 protection is particularly important for the soils present on the Gnangara mound. These soils are very transmissive—they allow water to percolate through the soil strata, which importantly enables the recharging of our very precious aquifers. P1 and P2 protection saves the Water Corporation money, because it does not need to conduct as much treatment on water from these areas as it does for water from P3 areas. This is due to the need to comply with Australian drinking water guidelines for water quality. Thank goodness we have them! Semi-rural activities are allowed in P1 and P2 areas, but intensive industry and urban development are not. The risks are managed without the need for complex and expensive civil engineering structures. Land use is constrained to easily manageable and low-impact uses for local food production and to help maintain our ever-declining remnant vegetation and habitat for native and endemic species.

The planning for an industrial area at south Pinjar is strongly mentioned in the Connell Wagner report for the Gnangara sustainability strategy. The Neerabup industrial area, which lies to the north west of the subject area, is as yet undeveloped. The Gnangara industrial area is rapidly spreading to join the Wangara industrial area. It already acts as a major employment generator. The groundwater from this area moves into Lake Joondalup and is a major contributor to water quality concerns for the lake and the western portion of the mound. The Pinjar industrial area is much further north and east and will impact on groundwater quality and quantity should it go ahead. As I have already indicated, it will also be far more expensive in a range of other areas.

HON ED DERMER (North Metropolitan) [10.59 am]: I am very pleased to rise in support of the motion moved by my colleague representing the North Metropolitan Region, Hon Ken Travers. It has been my privilege to serve with Hon Ken Travers for in excess of the past 13 years in this North Metropolitan Region that we

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represent. I am not at all surprised to see this quality motion come forward from Hon Ken Travers, as he has a very clear understanding of the needs, aspirations and concerns of our constituents. His understanding is firmly grounded in experience. I note his previous role as the chairman of the North West Corridor Coordinating Committee, which operated in the term of the Carpenter government and which was designed to anticipate the needs of the people of the northern suburbs and, in a comprehensive manner, consider all their needs. The committee engaged the involvement of appropriate industry and local government authorities in the area with a view to accommodating all the needs of the people of the northern suburbs. A matter continuously foremost in my mind and in the mind of Hon Ken Travers was the need for local employment opportunities in the northern suburbs. Obviously, the growth of such opportunities would have the advantage of reducing the pressure on the public transport system and on the road system, and would develop an even greater sense of community in those northern suburban regions where there is a very strong tradition of community feeling. I am talking particularly about long-established places such as Wanneroo and other areas that are considered pioneering districts of our state. We believe that such a community spirit, strong as it is, could be further enhanced. Providing local employment opportunities would be a very important part of building the community spirit within those suburbs and would build further on the already substantive strength of that community spirit.

Hon Ken Travers' role in chairing the North West Corridor Coordinating Committee was a role that added to his experience and understanding. The initiative that he has taken in moving this motion today is in keeping with the experience and understanding that he has acquired by way of the service he has delivered to his constituents now for more than 13 years.

It was interesting to hear Hon Michael Mischin endeavour to explain the government's position on this site. It seems to me that there is some evidence in what Hon Michael Mischin has said that gives me hope, as reading between the lines I can foresee the government backing away. I believe Hon Ken Travers's initiative and the very strong community feeling evidenced by approximately 4 500 signatories to a petition prove an example of a foolish proposal of which the government will probably realise the political consequences if it persists. Hon Michael Mischin went to some pains to make clear to us that the government has not made a final decision.

Hon Michael Mischin: So your motion is premature!

Hon ED DERMER: Not at all. I will explain to Hon Michael Mischin why the motion is far from premature. Hon Michael Mischin talked about the development of the industrial land strategy. He made it very clear that the government has not yet made a final decision. He did not make clear in his speech—I would be happy to accept an interjection from him—when he expects the government to make that final decision. Does Hon Michael Mischin intend to make that clear now, by way of interjection?

Hon Michael Mischin: No. I can't tell you.

Hon ED DERMER: I think that would be very helpful advice to me.

Hon Michael Mischin: I don't know the answer to that but I will find out for you.

Hon ED DERMER: I appreciate Hon Michael Mischin telling me that he does not know the answer to it. I think the government needs to work out its answer to that. I think the best advice for the government to take up would be to take up the call in Hon Ken Travers's motion and immediately cease any further suggestion of using this site for an industrial zone.

Hon Michael Mischin: I did say that the departments of Planning and Water are working closely to undertake the necessary studies into whether a reclassification of the Gngangara water mound or parts thereof and the question of the boundaries ought to go from priority 1 to priority 3, and that no result is expected on that until late next year or early the following year.

Hon ED DERMER: I listened very carefully to the words of Hon Michael Mischin and I appreciate the odd reminder that he has given me by way of interjection. I will now explain to the house why the course of action suggested in Hon Ken Travers's motion—that is, an immediate cessation in progressing the planning of a new industrial estate on the Gngangara mound at Pinjar south—is a far more appropriate course than the one that Hon Michael Mischin has explained is the government's course.

I am not at liberty to talk about the inner workings of the Standing Committee on Public Administration that I have had the pleasure to serve on for some time. However, by way of a matter referred to the committee by the house, we have explored the issue of water protection in some detail. I was particularly interested this morning to hear the comments of Hon Alison Xamon and to hear of her expertise. We have long benefited from the particular expertise of Hon Sally Talbot in environmental and planning matters. When the report of the Standing Committee on Public Administration comes to the house, there will be further consideration of and further opportunities for us to deliberate on these very important matters. It is important to base these decisions on scientific evidence. Science is continually progressing. My own scientific training leads me to the understanding

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that science is never a completed task. In fact, I look with suspicion upon anyone who talks about scientific fact, because I believe that science is a matter of theory, with accumulating evidence to increase or diminish probability, but never a matter of absolute fact, and I accept that matters need to be changed.

I also give due credit to the Legislative Assembly for its good work in 1994 in providing a foundation. I say to Hon Kate Doust that it is unusual for me to encourage the junior chamber, but I will on this occasion give credit where it is deserved. However, when it comes to the water that we drink and when it comes to an understanding that science is a matter of probability rather than certainty, the precautionary principle becomes a very important consideration in any decision that is made.

The reason that I think it is far more appropriate to support the motion of Hon Ken Travers calling for the immediate cessation of progressing towards using this part of the Gngangara mound for an industrial estate, rather than the drawn-out process described by Hon Michael Mischin, is that the possibility of that location being used for an industrial estate is a cause of massive anxiety to many of my constituents—in the order of at least 4 500 of my constituents. They are the adult constituents who signed the petition, but they obviously represent a larger number of people, including children in families in that area.

There is a fundamental requirement for a reliable water source. Hon Michael Mischin is saying that the government is taking its own sweet time to consider its industrial land strategy, and it will get around to letting people know at some point in the future when it suits the government whether this proposal for an industrial estate at Pinjar south will go ahead. That will add to the anxiety of my constituents. I am not impressed.

Hon Michael Mischin: Would you prefer a decision without investigation?

Hon ED DERMER: I am far more impressed with the proposal that Hon Ken Travers has put forward for an immediate cessation in progressing the planning of an industrial estate. That will remove the anxiety that my constituents are suffering at this time in this matter. I say to Hon Michael Mischin that the reason I am a great believer in proper planning is that part of proper planning in this matter would be a scheme of assessment. Could Hon Michael Mischin advise us today when the government is likely to make a final decision on this matter?

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [11.09 am]: I want to say a couple of things but first of all I will complete some comments that Hon Alison Xamon was making and unfortunately ran out of time.

By way of completion, the other issue is that there are plans for a major six-lane highway through the western portion of Gngangara mound to link industrial areas with major road routes by 2031. Additionally, there are plans to link this small industrial area with other four-lane roads through the P1 and P2 water protection areas. We need to be mindful of the longer term strategic possibilities if this proposal was progressed. Threats to the health of the environment in East Wanneroo, Pinjar and the Gngangara mound are constant, increasing and becoming more complex.

I also want to add general comments to this motion, which is a good motion and I thank Hon Ken Travers for bringing it to the chamber. I have met with a group of people who have been very diligent and effective in gathering their facts and figures about the threats to not only the Gngangara groundwater in particular, but also the other environmental and lifestyle attributes that they value living in that area. As Hon Ken Travers mentioned, the area also has a site of significance to the Nyoongah people.

In the debate this morning the government said that this is just an option, it is part of the planning process, and that we need to consider all the variables and then make a decision. If so, why are people objecting to the fact it has been put up as a proposition? Time and again we have seen governments of the day put up propositions for land use developments that are inappropriate really at their very outset and should not be included in certain areas. We are seeing that happening with the coalmining proposition in Margaret River on a priority 1 water area where —

Hon Michael Mischin: The government isn't coalmining in Margaret River.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I am asking about at which stage does the government take into consideration the environmental and community values and say that it will not even look at doing a particular activity in a particular area. That is the comparison I make because we have the Premier basically saying, "I don't support this and I won't be putting my weight behind mining in Margaret River." Good on him for saying that. We happen to agree with him on that. We do not agree with him on a lot of things but on that we do! Therefore, why is the Margaret River situation any different from the people of Wanneroo saying that they understand the environmental values of their area and they have evidence that the priority is protection of the groundwater and the ecosystems that are also dependent on it?

We should not even begin to go down the path of looking at putting industrial zoning over any part of the Gngangara mound. Quite frankly, when I first heard this inclusion was under consideration I thought, "That's

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crazy!” Surely, if we have learnt one thing it is that with our reduced rainfall, we will likely be reliant almost entirely on groundwater. This groundwater resource is an extraordinarily important resource for people to be able to even live on this bit of the coast. We need to consider what is happening to water resources in Adelaide and Melbourne because they are reliant on dams and reservoirs and do not have the kind of buffering effect that we get from a very large groundwater body. However, we have been basically mining that groundwater resource for a considerable amount of time and we do not even know the actual recharge rate of that mound. We also do not know with any surety the interconnection between the superficial aquifers and the deeper aquifers, so it is almost impossible to overstate how valuable the Gnamptara and Jandakot mounds are in being able to live on the Swan coastal plain. Therefore, we must put consideration of what we do over the groundwater mound into the very highest category. In our view that is about rehabilitating a lot of those areas, improving the natural vegetation and ensuring that the quality of the groundwater is as best as we can have it now, considering that it has already been impacted on and that the water levels continue to drop.

We know that the groundwater mound is in trouble; therefore, the last thing we want is for any incompatible land use to even be proposed for that area. I think Hon Ken Travers compared our situation with places like California. California has completely destroyed its groundwater asset through not only poor land use practice but also a deep well injection of a whole lot of waste into its groundwater. I remember being briefed on this, probably about 15 years ago, by someone who had been very active in California on the issues of groundwater. It makes for some good comparisons because climatically we are quite similar and are subject to drought and other factors. Basically, she said that once we pollute our groundwater, it is almost impossible to remove that pollution. We have issues with plumes of pollution in various groundwater bodies. I know that the Department of Environment and Conservation acknowledges that we can do some things to manage it and attempt remediation but it is incredibly difficult once the ground is contaminated. Even though this proposal is at a conceptual stage, we do not know what industries would be proposed for that industrial land. Couple that with some of the other changes we are seeing with this government. If this proposal was subject to an environmental assessment and it was assessed at a strategic level, any industry that was placed on that site afterwards, assuming it got approval, would not be subject to assessment because it would be a derived proposal. Therefore, we must consider all these factors at once and that is why, in our view, we need to have a planning approach that simply sets aside these priority 1 groundwater areas and will not consider any zoning that would impact on the viability of that water source and the systems that are reliant on it. Again, bear in mind that the Swan coastal plain has lost at least 80 per cent of the wetland systems that existed before European settlement. Therefore, the wetland systems that do remain are incredibly valuable to the ecosystems and communities that they support, and the community values them more and more. These wetlands will be under continued stress from a drying climate and reduced rainfall. Let us not forget that we are having the second driest winter ever recorded in Western Australia —

Hon Sally Talbot: Liberal Party highways.

Hon GIZ WATSON: And highways, yes.

Therefore, we passionately support the motion put up by Hon Ken Travers. We implore the government to listen to the level of community concern and realise that it is based on a considerable amount of good evidence; it is not simply in the category of a nimby concern. Not that there is anything wrong necessarily with people objecting to a proposed industrial development in their backyard either, but I recognise that we must have industrial precincts somewhere. However, this is not the place, and that is the whole point that the community has made to me very clearly. The government needs to take this proposal off the books now because it is causing an extraordinary amount of stress and strain, even though arguably it is only a process we are going through. Why would any government contemplate an industrial precinct on top of a priority 1 groundwater resource?

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [11.20 am] — in reply: I waited to see whether any other member wished to speak before I spoke in reply because I did not want anyone to miss out on the opportunity of doing so.

It is great to see that the member for Wanneroo has come into the chamber to listen to at least part of this debate. As the local member, I hope he takes on board the issues that have been raised and that he will advocate dropping this proposal immediately. I was a little surprised that we did not hear a response from either the minister representing the Minister for Planning or at least from the Minister for Environment. It was left to one of my colleagues from the North Metropolitan Region to respond on behalf of the government. I do not know whether he volunteered for the job or was drafted into it. I understand that because of the constraints of government he might not have been able to publicly join with us today, but I was a little disappointed that, as a fellow member for the North Metropolitan Region, he led the charge against the interests of our own constituents.

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The parliamentary secretary suggested that the previous Labor government did not seek to address these issues. We were concerned about the issues in east Wanneroo and about employment lands. The “Industrial Land Strategy 2009 Perth and Peel” was commenced under the Labor government. I can assure members that if I had been told that one of the proposals to come out of that plan was to recommend land on the Gngangara mound be used for industrial purposes, I would have said “Forget it” and I would have made that clear to cabinet. The Gngangara sustainability strategy was commenced under the former Labor government because we realised the complexity of the issues. The Gngangara sustainability strategy seems to be one of the drivers for the government’s proposition that the land can now be excised from priority 1 land and be made available for industrial development. However, as Hon Alison Xamon said, its report has not been released. If it is the driver and the basis of the science, I would have thought that the government would have released that before putting out the industrial land strategy, which is an attempt to grab this land off the mound.

The parliamentary secretary suggested that my motion was premature. It is not premature. If anything, it is a bit late in coming. I should have got my act together sooner and represented the views of my constituents. It is not premature. The argument that this is only an investigation into the proposal is nonsense. Once the investigation is started, it will lead to other things. We should not be touching the mound. The boundaries of the mound have been set and we should follow the recommendations of the Select Committee on Metropolitan Development and Groundwater Supplies that the boundaries remain. We should not allow creep or incremental development onto the mound, because today it is a proposal for an industrial estate at south Pinjar and tomorrow, once the door has been opened, it will occur in other areas. The parliamentary secretary’s argument that the water from the mound may no longer be required is nonsense. The bores that are subject to this land could be turned off, but, as Hon Alison Xamon pointed out, we are talking about the recharge area for the Gngangara mound, which flows across the northern suburbs and into priority 2 and 3 areas. That is why this area is a priority 1 area. It is not just about where the bores are located.

Hon Michael Mischin: Have you told the Department of Water that you have a greater insight into how the mound works than it does?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No, but I have a greater insight into politics than the Department of Water. I know how these departments work and I understand that once the door is opened and we have a debate about reacquiring the mound, we will continue to see creep. That is what the select committee warned us about and that is what is happening because that is what this government is doing. The Gngangara mound is not one of 30 priority 1 sites, as the parliamentary secretary would have us believe, it is one of six priority sites. The basic line I was trying to get across to the government was that it should not put its effort into doing this type of research because it is fundamentally the wrong position. The government should use its time and effort to look at the other sites and at other ways of providing employment land in the northern corridor. I outlined a range of areas for the government to do that. However, that advice seemed to go into one ear and out the other. There are other jobs the government could be doing rather than worrying about putting time and money into research into whether or not to allow creep onto the mound to occur. Instead of offering a simplistic land grab solution, the government should look at how it can free up more land within the existing industrial areas and maximise the land use and provide other employment lands that are not industrial lands or are not on the water mound. They are the things the government should be doing and getting on with. This motion is not premature because the government is wasting its time and resources by doing what it is doing. It cannot take areas out of the mound without having an impact.

In conclusion, the parliamentary secretary suggested that the major objection of Clearwater Revival East Wanneroo was the inclusion of special industry and that that has now been removed. I join with my colleague Hon Sally Talbot in inviting the parliamentary secretary to meet with members of CREW after this debate. I am sure they will point out to the parliamentary secretary that their concerns are far broader. They are about sustainability, Aboriginal issues and the protection of the water mound. CREW has a whole list of concerns. In fact, I feel guilty, after the research CREW has done on this matter, that I did not do the group justice in the time I had available to put before the house all the issues and research CREW has done. However, I assure the parliamentary secretary that it is about more than just special industry.

Hon Michael Mischin: I didn’t say that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member did.

Hon Michael Mischin: I said that it was “a” major concern; I did not say that it was “the” major concern.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I believe that the members of CREW who were in the public gallery today were very restrained. I would not have been able to restrain myself; I would have interjected when I heard that. I am not trying to encourage them now, either.

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Hon Michael Mischin: You are speaking to the wrong person. You should be speaking up there, Hon Ken Travers. That is who you are talking to. You're speaking to the public gallery.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am putting forward a very important issue for my constituents. The parliamentary secretary has been sent out as the bunny to do the work of the minister representing the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Environment. This is a bad proposal and it is bad for WA.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to temporary orders.