

SWAN AND CANNING RIVERS MANAGEMENT BILL 2005

Third Reading

MR J.B. D'ORAZIO (Ballajura - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [3.54 pm]: I move, on behalf of the Minister for the Environment -

That the bill be now read a third time.

DR S.C. THOMAS (Capel) [3.55 pm]: I will endeavour not to take my full 30 minutes on the third reading of this bill. I want to start by thanking those members of the Liberal Party who contributed so strongly to this debate, in particular the members for Moore, Carine and Dawesville, all of whom have put in a large amount of work on this bill. I ask the minister to pass on our thanks to the staff of the Swan River Trust for their briefings and their time during consideration in detail, in particular Darryl Miller, Cheryl Leyland and Rod Hughes, the chief executive officer. They have been very helpful. If the minister could also thank the policy officer, Gino, I would appreciate that. All those people have put in a lot of time and effort to make sure we are well educated on this bill.

There is no doubt that the Liberal Party is a great supporter of the environment and the Swan and Canning Rivers in particular. There was never any doubt that the Liberal Party would support this bill. We believe that the Swan and Canning Rivers - the iconic rivers of this state - are integral to not only tourism and the environment, but also the wellbeing of the people of Western Australia. This bill goes some way towards affording protection to the river systems. In the main it is a very good bill, and we are glad to be a part of it.

We remain disappointed, of course, that we have not been able to obtain an assurance from the minister about the extent to which agricultural practices may be targeted by river protection notices. We do not have the numbers in this place, so we must accept the outcome of the Parliament, but we will be watching with a great deal of interest to see in what form river protection notices will be applied and how they will be used by the Swan River Trust, because we are very -

Mr P.D. Omodei: The debate in the other house will be interesting too.

Dr S.C. THOMAS: Yes. There will be a debate in the upper house, and that debate will be very interesting, of course. There was never any intention on the part of the Liberal Party that river protection notices would not be an integral and enforceable part of this bill. However, we are disappointed that we do not know exactly what impact those notices will have on the agricultural community in Western Australia. That remains a concern. However, we have little option but to wait and see what happens. It will be incumbent upon the Swan River Trust and the minister - and future ministers, of course - to do the right thing. It remains my firm belief that the appropriate way in which to impact upon the agricultural sector is through a separate piece of legislation that passes through this Parliament. That would be a much better way to approach this issue. Obviously we can do little to alter the bill at this stage; however, it will be going to the upper house for debate. We still need to go through consideration in detail of the Swan and Canning Rivers (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill. That is a fairly minor bill. I cannot imagine there will be much objection to that bill. We may be able to put a couple of questions to the minister in advance and obviate the need for consideration in detail. We hope to be able to progress that bill relatively quickly.

Overall, this is a good bill and, generally, the outcome will be good. The opposition remains concerned about the impact of the bill on the agricultural community and it will monitor it carefully to make sure that it is not used inappropriately and, if it is, that the proper accounting for that process takes place.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Stirling) [4.00 pm]: I took the opportunity to speak in the second reading debate and to make a small contribution in the consideration in detail stage on behalf of the National Party. It is the intention of the Nationals to support this legislation. The spirit of this legislation is to protect the Swan and Canning river system. We did raise concerns about how the river protection notices will impact on farmers in the catchment area.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.