

STATE FLAG BILL 2004

Second Reading

Resumed from 5 May.

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [4.05 pm]: I rise to support this Bill. I am the one and only speaker on this legislation this afternoon. The Bill's purpose is to legislate recognition of the Western Australian flag via an Act of Parliament. Given that yesterday was Foundation Day and that all this week we are recognising the foundation of Western Australia, it is proper that we debate this matter today. Foundation Day marks the first European settlement in Western Australia and our flag plays, and has played, a very significant role in Western Australia's history. I make the analogy between a flag and the founding of a nation or State because it aptly ties in with the use of a flag.

Foundation Day, 1 June 1829, is a significant date in the history of Western Australia. The State's first settlers arrived on that day and completed their voyage to the Swan River Colony aboard the *Parmelia*. No doubt all members in the Chamber are aware that the *Parmelia* was captained by James Stirling. I gather that the weather on the first Foundation Day was not the best - apparently it was fairly wet - so the settlers did not disembark until a few days later. Having said that, 1 June 1829 is regarded as Western Australia's Foundation Day.

In a previous debate, I made some comments about protecting our flag. I will use part of that speech today. The national flag is our one constant. It is always there; it is respected, and it is seen as part of the nation's soul. Further, it is a gathering point for people. It was used by our ancestors in times gone by as a gathering point, initially and particularly in warfare. It subsequently became a recognised symbol of the unity of the nation. The Western Australian flag is no different. We recognise the Western Australian flag as part of our heritage and who we are. The flag is made up partly of the British blue ensign and consists of a blue flag with the Union flag occupying the upper quarter next to the staff. It is differenced in the fly or half of the flag further from the staff by the state badge, which is situated centrally in the fly. Western Australia's first flag, which was adopted in 1870, was little different from our current flag. It had the black swan facing toward the fly of the flag, rather than the hoist. I will not go into the technical details. No doubt if members look at the flag, they will understand the difference between a hoist and a fly. Since the earliest times, the black swan has been associated with Western Australia. Obviously as the settlers came up the river they saw black swans in numerous proportions, and they have since become a part of our flag.

I will go back in history to explain the reason for having flags. Having said that they are symbolic, flags are also very individualistic. Our state flag features the black swan and, therefore, it is individualistic to Western Australia. The flags of other States have different symbols that relate to those States. It is important that we are proud of our flag and that we recognise it. To that end, it has no legislative protection. It is important that we consider legislating the concept of our Western Australian flag. Obviously the flag has been used through the history of the State. I do not believe it was used in the State's first few years. I suppose the Union Jack would have been used as the flag of the day in those days when the first colonists arrived until a state flag was put together. If we look through history, we can see that a flag was used as a symbol by colonists of every nation that explored and landed in different parts of the world. I stress that it is a recognised symbol. I guess I have repeated that enough times.

I am aware that other private members' business must be dealt with this afternoon. The Leader of the House is not present in the Chamber, but I understand the Government has not yet had an opportunity to discuss this Bill in the party room and that it seeks the Opposition's agreement to adjourn the debate. I am aware that the Leader of the House and the member for Kingsley have discussed this matter and that that is the agreement between them. I conclude by saying that it is important that a flag be legislated for. It is very much part of our history and should be recognised as such. On that note, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later stage.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued at a later stage.]

Debate thus adjourned.