

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BILL 2004

Third Reading

MS A.J. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [4.45 pm]: I move -

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [4.45 pm]: I do not intend to speak very long in this third reading debate. I will make a few comments. The passing of the Planning and Development Bill 2004, the Planning and Development (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2004 and the Metropolitan Region Improvement Tax Amendment Bill 2004 have achieved the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's plan to update Western Australia's planning and development structures. Whether industry and the other associations and parties that have to work with the provisions of the Bills accept that the laws have been improved and streamlined remains to be seen.

In my second reading contribution I commented that concern had been expressed about the consultation process and its timing. However, that has now passed, and we have moved on. The suggestion that state planning policies have statutory force was one of the real sticking points for industry and the associations. The recognition of that by the minister and the removal of that provision has been welcomed by all the players involved in planning. The associations and bodies involved were concerned about that provision more than any other provision in the Bills. There are, of course, other changes that may not be acceptable to those in the planning industry. I do not intend to raise them all here, because we had that opportunity in the 11 hours of consideration in detail in the Legislation Committee. There is no doubt that our planning laws needed updating. In a gesture of goodwill to the minister, I commend her for bringing the changes forward and getting them through the lower House. I only hope that the amendments now in place reflect the minister's wishes for the Bills.

MS A.J. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [4.47 pm]: I thank the member for Greenough for his support. The member referred to the consultation period. As I have said on numerous occasions, this matter has been the subject of years of consultation as far back as 1998. The legislation has gone through various iterations. Indeed, in 2002 we held an extensive forum at which we got all the stakeholders together to work through the issues. We gave them extensive time to make submissions. We took all those submissions on board and released a further Green Bill. It is true that there was a relatively short period between the final Green Bill and the Bill we introduced into Parliament. However, that is because the matter was preceded by six years of negotiations. At some point a decision had to be made, and six years of dialogue on a Bill is quite adequate.

Another insight I tried to explain to the Opposition is that one can make a decision on any matter and local government will not like this, industry will not like that and community groups will not like something else. The difference in the way we consulted was that we brought the different groups together. We did not deal with them individually. We managed to sit them around a table together to work through the issues. No-one gets 100 per cent of what they want. However, we have achieved a reasonable balance between the competing interests. Although it is true that local governments have not got everything they want - they wanted cutbacks in certain areas that were opposed by the Environmental Defender's Office and other things that industry did not want - by the same token, we have made very real changes which will benefit local government but which perhaps the industry would have preferred we did not make. We like to think that we have brought all the parties together and that we have achieved a proper balance of those competing interests. In addition, instead of three disparate pieces of legislation dating back to 1928, we now have a single, integrated piece of legislation. That legislation will provide for much easier access to and understanding of the planning processes in Western Australia.

I appreciate the qualified support from the Opposition. I must say that I really liked the committee process, and I thank the Leader of the House. If I have any further Bills of this nature, I would certainly like to use the process that we have used for these Bills, because it was very productive. We had a very good dialogue across the table, and we got some amendments out of that process that will be very useful and will enhance the legislation. I thank all of the members who participated in that auxiliary committee for a job well done. I make special reference to the member for Geraldton, who was there for virtually the entire time, and the member for Greenough. I am sure this will be an important step forward for planning in Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.