

EXCISION FROM CLASS A RESERVE 29813, WIRELESS HILL PARK, ARDROSS

Motion for Disallowance

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [7.03 pm]: I will continue my remarks. I was part way through a letter, which I will continue to read. It is to Hon J.D. Anthony from the state Minister for Lands. It states -

The Premier of Western Australia, the Hon. David Brand, M.L.A. has communicated with the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Harold Holt, M.P. seeking his support and co-operation in having the land transferred to the State for parks, recreation and public use.

It is my considered opinion that the preservation of this area for public use is the joint responsibility of the Commonwealth and State Governments and I seek your valued co-operation and assistance to achieve this objective.

I earnestly request that the Government in this State be kept informed of any developments and that no action be taken by the Overseas Telecommunications Commission to dispose of this land before full consideration has been given to the matter by both Governments.

Yours sincerely,

I refer to gazettal as a class A reserve. The gazette notice proclaims Wireless Hill Park as reserve No 29813 for the purpose of public open space and recreation as a class A reserve. The proclamation was made under the Land Act 1933-1969. I do not need to read it. However, it was gazetted as such.

I refer to the definitions of a class A reserve. Section 42, "Class A reserves", of the Land Administration Act 1997 states -

- (1) The Minister may by order classify a reserve as a class A reserve.
- (2) A class A reserve retains a purpose specified in the relevant order made under section 41 until that purpose is changed under this section.

Section 42(4) states -

Subject to subsection (5) and section 45, if the Minister proposes -

- (a) to reduce the area of, or excise an area from, a class A reserve for a purpose other than a purpose referred to in subsection (3)(b) or (c);

...

the Minister must cause that proposal to be laid before each House of Parliament and section 43(1) then applies.

Section 43 deals with special procedures in relation to certain changes to class A reserves and conservation reserves, so that covers class A reserves.

I refer to the heritage values of the Hickey Street precinct. The teeth of an entry in the state heritage register is the statement of significance. This sets out the reasons that a place is worthy of protection. The current heritage assessment describes the place we are considering today as Wireless Hill Park, database No 3518 in the Register of Heritage Places. The statement of significance includes the radio telecommunications buildings atop the hill, and mentions the park's significance as an area of urban bushland. However, the statement of significance fails to refer to the Hickey Street houses and their historic access road. Only two paragraphs appear later in the assessment documentation that relate to the four Hickey Street houses. Paragraph 13(2) of the Register of Heritage Places assessment documentation states -

The accommodation buildings comprise three red brick and marseilles pattern clay tile residences and single men's quarters (known as "the village") with rendered plinths. The group faces north west along the access lane which forms the spine of a precinct.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Are you aware that we are not knocking these houses down?

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: I am sure the minister will have time to make her comments in a moment. It continues -

The first cottage is of interesting construction with tapered verandah columns although it is possible the columns are not original. It is believed this cottage housed the station manager. It has a more elaborate gable and chimney capping. The National Trust Exposition refers to Milton Boyce, a former architect with the Department of Works who recollected that the posts on the lowest cottage were replaced in

1942. The verandah columns of the quarters are square posts, the remaining cottages have tapered posts and are unremarkable otherwise.

I have read that into the record so that we have some idea of what we are talking about in relation to the cottages.

The Government's proposed excision of the area comprising the Hickey Street houses and their access road has raised the red flag, I suppose, in relation to their protection, no matter whether they remain within the class A reserve or whether the Government wins this vote - which I guess it probably will because of the numbers in this House - and proceeds with the unpopular plan, in the community's view, to excise them from the park.

When the State Government is considering the disposal of a heritage place, it is required to follow procedures - as I have no doubt the minister is very well aware - as laid down in the disposal of heritage assets policy. This nationally applauded policy was approved by Cabinet during the coalition's time in government. Part of that policy requires the responsible agency to ensure that a conservation plan is completed that will guide the future of the place. I am somewhat surprised that no conservation plan has to date been prepared for the four houses the Government proposes to excise from the heritage-listed Wireless Hill Park, either individually or as a precinct, as is required. A conservation plan would establish a detailed history of the place and set out a conservation policy to guide any future uses and works. It would also enshrine within the plan specific issues such as the sort of compatible uses that could be considered. I reiterate that it is the responsibility of the agency disposing of the area to ensure that the conservation plan is prepared prior to the completion of the property transfer. Given this Government's intention to excise the houses from the park, it is a little alarming that that simple but important process has been overlooked.

Finally, I refer to future management. Perhaps I have some suggestions in that regard. The future of the Hickey Street precinct needs full and careful consideration whether or not it remains within the boundaries of the A-class reserve. Its history deserves to be fully researched and documented and the stories associated with the houses recorded for the benefit of future generations. I am sure nobody would disagree with that. There is no way that the people of Western Australia will sit back and allow the houses to be demolished and the historic access road removed. I am not accusing this Government of planning to do that, but I flag that concern. We need to establish a management group that includes community representation to ensure that the precinct within Wireless Hill Park is given the strongest degree of protection and that plans are made to ensure the houses are conserved, restored and used.

I am very much aware that I have not mentioned - I know the minister will - that this situation has arisen because the Melville City Council needs money. I have no doubt the minister will give us the background to that and make some comments in that regard.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: You will write in embarrassment as I do.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: I am prepared to accept that. However, there is another side to this story. The Melville City Council wants to sell the Hickey Street reserve because it needs the funding. However, I am aware that the sale of various other pieces of land within the City of Melville could well provide the \$4.5 million that is owing -

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Tell us where they are. Are these the areas of public open space in working-class electorates?

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: With the greatest respect to the minister, I asked her questions on notice and she provided me with a list of reserves and various road and drainage reserves and their dollar values. Those roughly add up to almost \$5 million. Perhaps the minister should consider the other options.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: We want the Liberal Party to tell us which bits of bushland it wants sold.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: Maybe the minister needs to look more closely at her responses to the questions I asked on notice.

The Opposition opposes the excision of Hickey Street, and that is the reason for the motion, which I support.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House).