

**CITY OF PERTH BILL 2015**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 23 February.

**HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan)** [3.42 pm]: This City of Perth Bill 2015 has certainly caused some considerable angst for constituents of the North Metropolitan Region. I think it is fair to say that they are a group of constituents who feel that their voice has not been heard by the government or members in the other place, or for that matter a number of their representatives in the upper house, on the issues they want to have considered. Certainly, I tried, as did my colleagues on this side of the house, to have this bill referred to a committee yesterday. We were unsuccessful in doing that and I respect the will of the house on that matter. But it is sad that those people—the council and the residents of the area affected—have not been given the opportunity to have the issues they want raised properly considered and dealt with in a reasonable manner. Counterbalanced against that are obviously the issues we face with the policy of this bill, the main one of which is to establish capital city legislation, and that is something that the Labor Party and I support. Often when in opposition we are put in the position of supporting the policy of a bill, but being incredibly unhappy with the process adopted by the government in bringing it in, and the two sides of the debate have to be weighed. It is fair to say that I have been inundated with contacts today from people whose disappointment was exacerbated by the flippant and arrogant way in which the minister responded to the issues with respect to this bill raised in this house, not just by me, but by members from all around the house. We may be able to disagree from time to time, but I think we can sometimes disagree with a lot more respect than was put forward in the debate last night. That is certainly the view that has been expressed to me by a number of people from the area affected by this bill. Remember, it is not just the 3 000 residents of the Crawley finger, as the minister refers to it; it is all residents of the City of Subiaco who are going to be impacted economically by the decision to remove those ratepayers from the City of Subiaco.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** It's within your power to stop, so let's not have any crocodile tears.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I wish it were in my power to stop this bill and have it dealt with in a proper way, Hon Simon O'Brien, but it is not. Hon Simon O'Brien knows as well as I do that a whole range of issues come together in this legislation.

Today I want to start by correcting or challenging a point put forward by the minister in the debate yesterday when she explained how the Crawley finger, as she referred to it, first came into existence. She told the house that it was to allow barges to pull up so people could bring their goods and services into the town of Subiaco or whatever it was called then. At the time, I challenged her on this. I would have thought that a minister paying due respect to consideration on a bill like this might have understood the history of this area. As I understand, from talking to historians of the area, there is a very different history of how the Crawley finger, as the minister referred to it, came into existence. It is an interesting one and members would not be surprised to learn that it got my interest because it had something to do with trams. The history of this land, south from Subiaco down to the Nedlands foreshore, actually dates back to the start of the 1900s. There was a proposal to build an extension of the tramline, which at that stage ran to Subiaco, down to the Nedlands foreshore.

**Hon Helen Morton:** To do what? Why was it going down to the foreshore?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** It was for recreational activities more than anything else. I do not know that goods and services are taken on trams; people are taken on trams. Railway lines take goods and services, as the minister would remember from the history of the Fremantle railway line. I know the Liberal Party does not care too much about railways, but there is a history of the railway line from Fremantle to Perth, which was one of the early lines. The history of how this area came into existence was that there was a wish to extend the tramways from Subiaco to the Nedlands foreshore. At the time, that land fell within the ambit of Claremont Roads Board—land that is now within the City of Nedlands—and it was not a particularly wealthy council, unlike what some may think of it today, and so the council could not help finance the extension. In those days local governments helped finance the railway systems. The council of Subiaco was more financially sound at the time and in a far stronger financial position, and it agreed to assist in the funding of the extension down the Subiaco corridor, as I think the people of Subiaco would prefer it to be called. The council agreed to help fund the construction of the tramway down to the Nedlands foreshore in return for annexation of the area through which the tram would run. Of course, it involved the construction of what is now known as Broadway, and in fact on one side it was annexed and the other was left within what is now the City of Nedlands, the former Claremont Roads Board area. I think one of the most amazing things is that to this day the street names in that area around the former tramline are named after former members of the Claremont Roads Board, not members of the Subiaco council. That is a sign of magnanimous behaviour by local government councillors or people in the political field. Imagine if we saw that sort of magnanimous behaviour today from people like the minister on the other side of this chamber.

**Hon Liz Behjat:** What names?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I am happy to go through them. There is a whole range of them.

**Hon Jim Chown:** Don't you want Ken Travers Boulevard?

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Not really; I think there is already a street named after the Travers family in Australind, but not related to me.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Yes, there is. Order, members!

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I am happy to go through it with the member at another time, but the history of the streets, particularly around the area between the University of Western Australia and Broadway —

**Hon Liz Behjat** interjected.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Except there would not have been women on the council in those days; anyway, I will move on. I will not be distracted!

It was about expanding the tram system, which was about moving people into the city and providing a connection for recreational purposes at Nedlands Baths. That is the history. The two interesting things about that story are, firstly, that local government was contributing to the cost of building trams, and, secondly, it was probably the first example of value-capture in Western Australia in that a council agreed to help fund the construction of a tramway in return for the land annexed to it so that it could collect the rates from the newly opened area. It was a land capitalisation process or value-capture related to the construction of public transport in Western Australia. We still talk about issues like that today. That land became part of the City of Subiaco because it paid for it; it made a contribution, and that is why it has that land. I do not know of any other piece of land in Western Australia where a city has that land in its boundaries because the city made a financial contribution to a piece of infrastructure.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Did they buy the actual land or was it that it invested in the —

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** As the story was told to me, the city contributed to the construction of the light rail, and in return that land was included in its borders. There was an expectation that the city would open the land for housing, and the rates from that land would go to the City of Subiaco. It was a commercial decision. As Hon Simon O'Brien knows, the original draft of the "Public Transport for Perth in 2031: Mapping out the Future for Perth's Public Transport Network"—the July 2011 version: remember that?—referenced the issues of value-capture and those sorts of things. It never went anywhere, but they were referenced. There is a long history, and this is not a simple issue. That is why, even to this day—even though trams are, sadly, long gone—we should be respectful in this place when discussing bills such as the City of Perth Bill 2015. I wanted to get on the record the long and interesting history of this land. It is not some sort of simple aberration that occurred with strange boundaries; the City of Subiaco put up money to make all this happen. That is not an argument against change, but that a lot more respect should have been shown in the development of that change.

It is worth going through some of the other issues around the mismanagement of this bill. It is extraordinary that we are dealing with a bill that we received at the end of last year. We did not start debating the bill until yesterday. By yesterday, one of the clauses in this bill made provision for the City of Subiaco to review its ward boundaries and present the review to the Local Government Advisory Board by 31 March. Put simply, the City of Subiaco could not conduct a review if we passed the bill today and presented it to the Local Government Advisory Board by 31 March, because, under the Local Government Act, it is required to give at least six weeks' notice for public comment about ward boundaries. The minister will say it can do that after the event, but there was clearly an acceptance that it should have been done ahead of the transfer, yet this incompetent government could not even get the legislation into this house so that that could occur in a timely manner. We did not start the debate on this bill before the date on which that would have had to have commenced to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act. That just highlights a government that is in complete and utter chaos and disarray, and is incapable of managing even the simplest tasks in the world. The passage of legislation through this Parliament is not rocket science. We can work out how long it will take to get bills through, but this government has failed to do that in any meaningful way—again, in my view, showing disrespect to the people of Subiaco. Sadly for the people of Subiaco, I think this government treats them with contempt because it works on the assumption that it is a conservative area and the people will always vote for the conservative party, so the government does not have to put anything back.

I have another area on which I look forward to seeing whether the minister will give us any due regard. It was raised extensively by many members in the house yesterday during the debate on the referral motion; that is, the economic impacts of these changes on the residents being moved and other City of Subiaco residents. If there had been a proper process or a committee had looked at the bill, the matter of the economic impact on the

City of Subiaco could have been dealt with. What will the economic impact be? I hope the minister will give us more than just a flippant and trite response to that question. I hope the government has done some work on what the financial impacts will be and how they will be mitigated.

I remember when the Liberal Party split the City of Perth and failed to adequately divide the assets. We had to come back into this place when Labor was elected in 2001 and correct those errors by putting through a bill to divide the Tamala parkland amongst the four councils, rather than leaving it with the City of Perth, to ensure proper equity and financial security for the councils of Vincent, Cambridge and Victoria Park. I am forever very proud of the role I played with, firstly, the constituents of the Town of Cambridge. I must say that I am not sure some people who were later elected to the Town of Cambridge really appreciated the work the Labor Party had done to try to secure their financial wellbeing, but that is life in politics, isn't it? We often do favours for people for which no appreciation is shown. It was a matter of principle, which is why I got involved with it. That was why I sat with the then mayor and chief executive officer of the Town of Cambridge and then worked with the other councils of Vincent and Victoria Park to get a fair and proper outcome. Labor had to come in and fix the mess of the Liberal Party. I make a commitment to the people of Subiaco today. Although this bill will go through this place, I will give a commitment to the mayor, Heather Henderson, who is one of my many favourite mayors in Western Australia. It is hard to find a mayor I do not like, to be honest, but Heather is one of those absolutely passionate people, and she has a council of absolutely passionate councillors who have nothing but the best interests of the people of Subiaco at their heart and they do it for the love of their communities. I give a commitment to those people that as a member for North Metropolitan Region I will do my utmost best to help them manage the financial impacts of this bill. I expect we will not get a proper answer from the minister about how the government expects those things to be managed, and so it will be about the Labor government cleaning up that mess after March 2017. Sadly, I suspect the future member for Nedlands will still not be a member of the Labor Party, but you never know your luck in the big city! I reckon the way this government is treating the western suburbs that after the next election although we may not have a Labor member, we also may not have a Liberal member representing some of those western suburbs areas. Nonetheless, that is my commitment to the mayor, the councillors, and the residents of Subiaco. I will certainly do my best to ensure that the government helps them to address the financial issues that arise out of the passage of this bill through this place.

I want to say to the staff at the City of Subiaco that I know this will be a very difficult time for them as they wonder whether their jobs will be among the ones to disappear. I pass on my apologies that I was not successful in achieving an outcome yesterday to have this bill referred to a committee so that their issues could be properly addressed and considered before the passage of this bill. Again, I apologise to them for failing yesterday in that task, but I give my commitment that I will work with them to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on them and their employment as a result of the passage of this bill. This is a time of high unemployment levels in Perth. Unemployment is growing, and we failed to prepare for the time after the boom because the Premier kept sitting there saying, "The boom will go on forever. We don't need to plan for after the boom because it's going to be a continual climb; it won't stop." It will be very concerning for those people who are wondering whether they will be employed or be transferred, and what the conditions will be. My words here today will probably give them little comfort, but all I can offer them is that I will do my best to ensure that they get a fair deal out of this process. Although the principle of the bill is good, the process has been appalling and, again, I want to apologise on behalf of Parliament to my constituents who live in the City of Subiaco for the way in which they have been treated by this government. It does not give me any great comfort about the passage of this bill, but one thing I know about the people of Subiaco is that they are a resilient mob and they have a resilient council that will lead them through these times as they get through the economic impacts of this decision. That gives me great joy.

I arrived in Parliament with a view that big is better for local government; the bigger a local government, the better it is because it is more efficient and more effective. One of the things I have learnt as a member of Parliament is that the greatest sense of community is in those councils with small local governments. Whether it is Heather Henderson in Subiaco, John Carey in Vincent, Ron Norris in Mosman Park —

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** They're big fans of yours at the moment.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I think if the member asked Ron, he would say he was never a fan of the Labor Party, but he does not mind Hon Ken Travers! I do not know; I might be putting words in his mouth, but —

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** No, I think you're right.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I have always had a good relationship with Ron and good dealings. Another favourite shire president of mine—not a mayor—is Rachel Thomas down at the Shire of Peppermint Grove. She is an absolutely lovely person who is passionate about her community. Tracey Roberts in Wanneroo is another great mayor.

**Hon Simon O'Brien** interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order, members! I believe we are dealing with the City of Perth Bill 2015, not who we like in local government. I just ask that members focus on the topic at hand.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Lisa Scaffidi is a great Lord Mayor!

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** I thought the member was talking about future boundary extensions. He has already got Peppermint Grove and Wanneroo.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Is Hon Simon O'Brien suggesting a City of Brisbane-style council? The point is that I have learned that with someone such as John Gangell in Bassendean, the community knows their mayors and their councillors. They interact with them at the local shops and at every opportunity. They do not spend huge sums of money on publications and glossy leaflets; they have one-on-one communications with their local communities. Having lived in areas with small councils and large councils, I know that there is a sense of community that arises out of areas with smaller councils. There is also a greater sense of community resilience. In that sense, I have absolutely no doubt that the people of Subiaco will deal with the issues that arise out of this bill. They will get on with their lives and they will be supported by good people. Councillors at the City of Perth are focused on ensuring that City of Perth residents get a good deal—people such as Councillor Harley. They will make sure that the residents who are transferred out of the City of Subiaco and put into the City of Perth are represented on the City of Perth council. One of the interesting things about this bill is an irony of what one sets out to do and what one actually achieves. I do not include the Lord Mayor in this, but some of the other councillors, in my view, have not always concerned themselves with the concerns of the City of Perth's residents but have only concerned themselves with their commercial interests. I think councillors such as Reece Harley have concerned themselves with both the residents and the commercial interests, and I suspect that the passing of this bill may be a bonus to people like that because they will now have a very active community in that area that will attach itself to councillors of that nature.

I make the final comment that I also believe that this bill will pick up some of the issues that have been raised by the University of Western Australia. There is no doubt that this bill will not address all the future demands that will arise from that area around the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre and the University of Western Australia. At some point, we will need to put in place some other planning mechanism to deal with the changes that will occur in the vicinity of those two institutions over the next 30 years, particularly in the activity corridor between the two. It is probably the area where we are completely lacking a real understanding of how to drive and manage the urban infill that people talk about. It is great to have targets but the real challenge, as set out in the Stephenson report of 1955, is to set the framework for how we deal with urban sprawl. We now need a detailed plan to deal with the urban infill, how it will occur, where it will occur and how to service that urban infill. Despite the minister opposite's claims, that has not occurred and we still do not have the very fundamental basis required for that to occur. That is a clear link between our transport plan—mainly because we do not have a transport plan—and our land use management plan.

Although in theory this bill seeks to address some of the issues about boundaries, local government and planning for the University of Western Australia—I note that because of the nature of it, the planning of the university itself is done by the Western Australian Planning Commission—for the activity corridors and surrounding areas, there is no doubt in my mind that, as I said yesterday, UWA, QEII, and Murdoch and Curtin Universities will transform in our lifetimes. We will see a transformation before we see a tunnel under every road of those three universities and their surrounding hinterlands. The challenge is to take the community with us. Although this bill has merit as a capital city bill, trying to bludgeon local residents with outcomes has put us back in the task of taking the communities with us in the journey that we need to make to transform Perth into the city of 3.5 million people that we assume we all want to see—certainly, the government has claimed that it is planning for it—and how to manage that. Bludgeoning people and taking the high-handed approach that this government has taken in implementing what is, on one level, good legislation, is a real problem for the opposition and it actually sets back our ability to really meet the tough challenges. It is never easy, and that is why Labor, unlike the Liberal Party, was not out there attacking urban infill. We saw the Libs attacking urban infill as part of the 2008 election campaign, but when they were elected, they suddenly agreed with Labor that we do need to deal with urban infill and have a proper plan for managing it. The government still has not done the proper planning, but it has put it in place. We have always had a constructive approach—the same sort of constructive approach that we have taken with the City of Perth Bill 2015. Despite the failings of the way in which it came into being, the fundamental principle is still there and it needs to be supported for that reason, but the way in which it got into the Parliament is a mess.

I wish I were powerful enough to have the ability to change the world in the way Hon Simon O'Brien has suggested, but I recognise that I am one of 36 members in this house and that the old standing order 18-17 needs to apply to get anything done in this place, and sadly we have not been able to do that. We came close, but we could not collect the 18 votes needed yesterday to have the bill referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. It was a great outcome, and I appreciate the support of members like Hon Nigel Hallett and

Hon Simon O'Brien in that process. I hope they do not take this the wrong way, but they are clearly the canaries in the coal mine that is the current Liberal government, which is starting to show that it is old, tired and that we need to change. The reality is that that is the only way we are going to get a good outcome for the people of Subiaco into the future. We need to change the government.

**HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural)** [4.13 pm]: A lot has been said about the effect of the boundary changes and the fact that there will be 3 000 residents of the City of Subiaco who will find themselves in the City of Perth. In reality, it is not 3 000 ratepayers; it is 3 000 residents. In fact, there are only 1 347 ratepayers, as I understand it, who will move from the City of Subiaco to the City of Perth. Not a lot of people have written to me to complain about the fact that they are going to be moved into the City of Perth. Some city councillors have written to me, but I have had only two or three letters from residents. I am a member for Agricultural Region, so that is probably to be expected. Overall, I think for most ratepayers, if their rubbish is collected and their rates are not going to go up by too much, the vast majority of them really do not have a great concern about whether the logo changes on their rates notice.

Something else I picked up in the briefing is that the average rate per household in the City of Perth is \$1 323 per annum, while for the City of Subiaco it is \$1 575, so some of those ratepayers from the City of Subiaco might find that they have a reduction.

**Hon Peter Collier:** Mine is \$4 000!

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** It goes on the value of the property, Hon Peter Collier, so that might have something to do with it!

There is also the loss to the City of Subiaco in rates revenue of \$2.2 million, and a further \$1.3 million from the car park at the City of Subiaco. That is a total of \$4.3 million a year, so I gather that is where the \$44 million over 10 years that has been mentioned by a few members has come from. What I have not heard about is the reduction in costs in relation to these changes.

**Hon Ken Travers:** That \$44 million, as I understand it, is a net figure.

**Hon RICK MAZZA:** I do not know where the net is coming from.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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*Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm*