

SUNSET HOSPITAL METROPOLITAN REGION SCHEME AMENDMENT

Motion for Disallowance

DR TURNBULL (Collie) [5.02 pm]: I move -

That this House disallows Sunset Hospital Site Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendment No 1024/33 a copy of which was laid upon the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 10 October 2000.

This motion has been moved because of a technicality. The regulations have been laid on the Table for only 11 days when technically, they had to lay on the table for 12 days. As the House is rising today and not coming back for some time, this technically means that if the Parliament were to be prorogued, these regulations would lapse. In order to ensure that they do not, I am moving this disallowance motion so that it can be debated and accepted or rejected by the House. I do not have very much support for this disallowance motion and most likely it will be defeated. The regulations will then become operative and will be able to be incorporated in the regulations of the stated amendment.

MS MacTIERNAN (Armadale) [5.04 pm]: For a moment I thought that the member for Collie had attended the same public meeting I attended in the Premier's electorate last Saturday morning. The member would have heard the irate burghers from Dalkeith and other various western suburbs express their disappointment that the Government would effectively flog off this A-class reserve and close it from public use after it had been in public use for over a century. It is a prime location. It has been an A-class reserve since the turn of the century. It is one of the most beautiful spots in Perth and is one of our treasured waterfront spaces. It is perhaps one of the last spaces to become available to the public with the closure of the Sunset Hospital.

This side of the House opposes the closure of the Sunset Hospital. We believe that that site should have remained available for elderly Western Australians of limited financial means to live out their later years. During the debate on the associated lands Bill, I asked the Premier if he was not concerned that Dalkeith was becoming a ghetto for the rich, but he did not believe that was a question that could be seriously answered. It is a serious question. That site, which was set deliberately aside for the indigent elderly of our State, is part of our historical fabric. This Government has the idea that if the poor or the less well off are provided with accommodation on prime sites, they must be moved away and that only those who are wealthy in our society deserve to have access to the riverfront. According to the Government, Heathcote Hospital had to close just as Sunset Hospital must close. What glorious plan is in its place? Eighty units! It is proposed that the existing historic buildings will be converted into 40 or 50 units and another set of about 30 two-story townhouses will be constructed. The Government claims this is a retirement village. The Opposition questions whether this is a retirement village. It has not been proposed with any seriousness. The site does not provide for any nursing home accommodation or any medical assistance.

This will become a set of villas for the elderly wealthy people aged over 55 from the western suburbs - half the Cabinet would be eligible to acquire these properties, if not immediately, within a year or two. In our view it does not provide for the frail aged members of the community who may want to stay. It provides opportunities for other people who are well-heeled to move into that area. The Government's view is that only the wealthy can live on riverfront properties. We do not accept that.

We also are concerned that the Government has made certain claims that it has tried to get the not-for-profit sector to take over the facility but has been unsuccessful. The Government says that the cost of the renovation would be too great for the not-for-profit sector to be able to operate the hostel.

The Opposition questions that. No documentation has been presented to support that contention. The Government is loading up the notional cost of doing up the parklands, saying that whoever takes over this area must provide \$4.5m to do the work, which seems an extraordinary over-capitalisation in an area of great natural beauty. At the public meeting it was revealed that the Melvista nursing home had indicated that it wanted to seriously consider moving onto that site. The Opposition believes that option must be explored before the Government is given carte blanche for this proposal. The Opposition is not convinced that other combinations of proposals might not see this site become viable without going down the road proposed by the Government. A number of people have expressed interest in taking over some of the historic buildings and running them as restaurants. One proposal is to combine the two chapels on the site with some of the historic buildings and create a wedding and reception centre. Nearby Tawarri Lodge is far too small for the kind of functions now being planned, and its operators have expressed interest in moving. A raft of possible proposals has been presented.

The Opposition would be very interested to see what could be done to ensure that once again that site provides accommodation possibilities for elderly people in our community who are less well off. The Opposition does not believe that only those who are wealthy and who live in the western suburbs have an entitlement in their

autumn years to enjoy the great beauty of that site. The Opposition made its decision on this matter only very recently, after the public meeting. It agrees with the Government in one respect - that whatever happens on that site must be self-funding. The restoration of the buildings and the improvement of the parklands for public use will have to be funded out of the commercial use of those buildings. The Government has not canvassed all the possible alternatives, and the option it is looking at is highly undesirable, in that it will close off large tracts of that area from public use, and ensure that a privileged 80 or so people alone will have access to about 40 per cent of the site, including the most prime positions. The Opposition is not prepared to support the Government on this issue, and will be voting for the disallowance.

Mr Kobelke: It is improper for the member for Collie to move this disallowance motion, and then to run out of the Chamber when it comes time to vote.

Mr House: Yesterday in this Parliament, when we were faced with this situation, only three members were in the Chamber - two ministers and the member for Collie. My understanding is -

Mr Kobelke: On the government side!

Mr House: There was none on the opposition side.

Mr Kobelke: I was here, I saw what went on.

Mr House: I do not think the member for Nollamara was here. There were not too many members in the Chamber, and the member for Collie. In defence of the member for Collie, she moved the disallowance motion at the request of other members. In fairness, I must point out to the member for Nollamara - and I think he knows it, from the grin on his face - that the member for Collie was an unwilling partner in this drama.

Question put and negatived.