

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

Motion for Disallowance

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [3.50 pm]: I move -

That the proposal contained in submission No 17 of 2003 - Excision from Class "A" Reserve 29813 - Wireless Hill Park, Ardross, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 11 September 2003, under section 42(4) of the Land Administration Act 1997, be disallowed.

The Liberal Party in opposition is representing the views of the community by opposing the excision of a portion of the historic Wireless Hill Park in Ardross. The Government's failure to engage in any meaningful consultation with the community has caused a lot of unnecessary alarm. I must say that it is a consistent characteristic of the Gallop Government that it says a lot about consultation, but when it comes to it, it does not do too much of it.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: It is the City of Melville's application.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: I am sure the minister will have an opportunity to make her comments when she gets the call. This alarm was caused by the minister's office, and I suppose, because of that, the minister was painted with that brush. The alarm came about as a result of the minister for lands' publication of a notice of intention on Monday, 16 June 2003. This notice stated that the minister planned to excise a 6 091 square metre area of land from reserve A29813, and the advertisement was under the name of Minister Alannah MacTiernan, minister for lands.

The advertisement describes the area proposed for excision as having four dwellings that are currently used for residential and community purposes. However, nowhere in that advertisement is there any intent to seek the views of the people in the community about what they think should happen to that A-class reserve, and nowhere in the advertisement does it state when the minister proposes to excise the land, or what other time frames may be associated with such an action.

The next thing that happened was that the minister tabled in this place a submission to Parliament under section 42(4) of the Land Administration Act 1997. This submission No 17/2003 - I guess that is the date - is the proposal that details the Government's intent to excise the area with the four houses and the historic road from the heritage listed park. I do not think I need to table the proposal, because it has been referred to in this place before. However, I have with me a copy of the proposal. These houses, while not individually listed on the state heritage register, are nevertheless offered some degree of protection, although at a fairly minimal level, under the broader Wireless Hill Park heritage listing. We should therefore perhaps look in some detail at the area proposed for excision and recognise that these dwellings are an important component of the local and State's history.

Wireless Hill Park is a class A reserve and covers a total of 39.6346 hectares, which equates to 99 acres. Much of the park is a remnant of our now fairly rare urban bushland. It is a prized treasure of our natural environment and a window to our past. Part of the park comprises the historic telecommunications buildings and the remains of the structures of the wireless station from the early part of the last century. The area proposed for excision comprises the four 1912 houses at Nos 2, 4, 6 and 8 Hickey Street, and the short bituminised access road in front of those dwellings.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Members, I will not allow conversations across the Chamber. The member has the call, and I would like to hear him, please.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. Wireless Hill Park is recognised under a number of lists for its heritage significance. It was listed with the National Trust of Australia in 1992. It was recognised nationally by the Institution of Engineers in 1994 as a nationally significant engineering heritage site, and was marked as such by the unveiling in 1994 of a historic engineering marker plaque. It was entered on the City of Melville's municipal inventory in 1994, and was again reassessed and proposed for entry at the highest management category on the current draft municipal inventory. It was also entered on the state heritage register in September 1997. The Hickey Street houses and their access road are included within those boundaries. Mr Acting Speaker, just as an aside, if you have not had the opportunity of going to Wireless Hill Park, I suggest that you do so. It is a very historic monument and has some very good views of the city.

I will give a brief history of Wireless Hill Park and the houses. The Commonwealth purchased the land for the wireless station in 1911, and construction of the radio communications buildings commenced. The facility was one of the first two radio stations in Australia, which, from 1912, enabled radio communication between Western Australia and the eastern States, and also for the first time radio contact was possible with shipping in the Indian Ocean. This was important for not only maritime safety, of course, but also its weather forecasting advances. In 1912 the government architect, Hillson Beasley, is recorded as being in charge of the design and construction of the four accommodation buildings that were located below the line of sight from the hilltop, and situated at the

bottom of the hill in Hickey Street. According to the Institution of Engineers heritage panel, three of the buildings - Nos 2, 4 and 8 - were constructed as residences for the officer in charge, the principal fitter and the telegraphist. Their use as residences has continued to this day, and they are leased by the City of Melville to private tenants. The fourth building was constructed as the single men's quarters - better known perhaps as a barracks - and this building is currently leased by a community group for its meetings. The location of the four accommodation buildings away from the main radio buildings was deliberate, so as to provide minimal interference with the radio aerial. I guess that makes fairly good commonsense in engineering practices.

In 1967 negotiations commenced between the State of Western Australia and the Commonwealth about the future of the site. This followed plans for the site's user at that time, which was the Overseas Telecommunications Commission, to relocate to an area north of suburban Perth. In those negotiations, the state Minister for Lands wrote to Hon J.D. Anthony, MP, federal Minister for the Interior, on 18 April 1967 and stated

-

I thank you for your letter of the 5th instant regarding the Applecross Wireless Station site.

It is the considered opinion of the Government of this State that the subject land should be retained for all time as public open space. Public opinion in Western Australia overwhelmingly supports the preservation of this area for parklands, etc.

For information, I enclose a comment which appeared in "The West Australian" of the 14th April, 1967, which is an indication of public interest in this vital matter.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 14106.]