

FREMANTLE ARTILLERY BARRACKS

1147. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to his decision on 17 September to decline an offer from the Commonwealth Government to transfer the Fremantle Artillery Barracks site to the State Government for vesting in the City of Fremantle, and ask -

- (1) Will the Premier advise the House whether his decision not to accept the Commonwealth's offer was based on the feasibility study that was chaired by Petrice Judge?
- (2) If so, did the Premier make any other investigations of relevant organisations outside the feasibility study that could have a solution to the barracks, such as the National Trust of Australia and, if not, why not?
- (3) Did the Premier consult Cabinet prior to his decision not to accept the Commonwealth's offer and, if not, why not?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(3) The Fremantle barracks issue goes back to before the last election. On one side there were those who strongly advocated for the preservation of the museum in that area. Along with them, the City of Fremantle and the then mayor Richard Utting made a strong case for that site to become a heritage precinct as part of Fremantle. We supported that concept. Under Richard Court, the former Government indicated that it would be happy to facilitate a vesting of that site in the City of Fremantle so that a heritage precinct could be created. The Commonwealth Government acceded to that request. The idea was that the site would go to the State and then to the City of Fremantle so that a heritage precinct could be created. Then there was a change of local government. The new mayor of the City of Fremantle, Mr Peter Tagliaferri, had a strong view that, should the State vest that site in the City of Fremantle, it would need to be assured that it would have a proper economic basis on which to run it. The Commonwealth Government, the State Government and the local government agreed that they would jointly fund a study to see whether it would be feasible for the City of Fremantle to run that site. That feasibility study, which was referred to by the member for Greenough, showed that under all the scenarios that were presented, significant costs would be involved for the City of Fremantle should it wish to take that site on board. The City of Fremantle reached the conclusion that, even though the Western Australian Government was willing to contribute \$2.5 million by way of payments for the use of some of the housing on the site, and even though other general commitments had been made that might realise revenue, it was not willing to take on the site. The whole purpose of the enterprise was to allow the City of Fremantle to put in place a heritage precinct. When it indicated to us that it was not interested because of the costs involved, we withdraw from the process, which was the right thing to do. I will make an important point about these sites. The federal Government is currently spending \$115 million of taxpayers' money to return for public use former defence sites in and around central Sydney. How much funding did the Commonwealth Government contribute towards the possible economic use of the Fremantle barracks site into the future? It contributed absolutely nothing. All the Commonwealth Government contributed was a portion of the funding for the feasibility study. It is good enough for the Prime Minister to sit in Kirribilli House and spend \$115 million on defence sites in and around Sydney, but he is not willing to spend one red cent on defence sites in Western Australia. That is an absolute disgrace. Many alternatives were explored as part of the feasibility study. If the Commonwealth Government was willing to put some money into that site, as it has done for sites in Sydney, to ensure that it can be used by the public, in cooperation with the City of Fremantle, we would be only too happy for that to happen. The problem with this site is not the attitude of the Government of Western Australia, which has been willing to contribute to the transfer of the site to the City of Fremantle, but is, yet again, the attitude of the Commonwealth Government of Australia to the people of Western Australia.