

CITY OF MELVILLE — PARKS AND RESERVES — ZONING

Grievance

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [9.34 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Planning and relates to the land use and zoning of several parks and reserves within the local government area of the City of Melville across my electorate of Bicton and the neighbouring electorates of Bateman and Willagee. I thank the Minister for Transport on behalf of myself and the members for Bateman and Willagee for hearing this grievance. My colleagues and I have the great privilege to represent electorates of notable natural beauty and ecological significance. From the foreshore reserves of Derbarl Yerrigan in Bicton and Bateman to the remnant banksia woodlands of Willagee's central reserves, our electorates are blessed with important places of public open space.

On behalf of my colleagues and our constituents, I would like to acknowledge our gratitude for the recent recommendation for rezoning to public open space the following parks: Baden Powell Reserve in Ardross, Charles Eckert Reserve in Applecross, Ogilvie Road Reserve in Mt Pleasant, the Bicton substation in Bicton, Davis–Lawlor park in Attadale and Geo Thompson Park in Palmyra. We know that land prescribed for the zoning of public open space is assured of protection and continuity of land use as parks and reserves for current and future generations to enjoy, so the commitment to rezone these parks is welcome news. Thank you, minister.

Studies on access to public open space and the associated benefits are plentiful and well documented. Just some of these benefits include providing places for people to meet, socialise, play and connect, which is associated with increased physical activity and improved mental health. I think it is fair to say that access to these opportunities is more important than ever. No less important are the ecological benefits associated with pockets of urban bushland, local parks and reserves. The many large established trees provide habitat for birds and other wildlife and welcome shade for humans and canine companions and are a vital antidote to the urban heat island effect.

That is why I am asking for a consideration of the expansion of the recommendation for local parks and reserves across the electorates of Bicton, Bateman and Willagee to a zoning of public open space for: Harry Clemens Reserve, Pitman Park and Prosser Park in Myaree; Marguerite Smith Reserve in Attadale; and Laurie Withers Reserve, Norm Godfrey Reserve, Jack Martin Reserve and the park near McBeth Way in Kardinya. In doing so, I would like to acknowledge the monumental efforts of several key community members in bringing this matter to our attention. On behalf of the member for Bateman and myself, I say thank you to Marina Hanson, Chris Gillam, Robyn Weir, Jill Bowman, Dr Kristin Warren, Jeanette Grosser, Carol Warren, Kristie Stuart, Sue and David Parks, Cindy McGhie and many others for their advocacy. Just some of the community actions undertaken to draw attention to this matter include the establishment of the Save Harry Clemens Reserve and Save Pitman Park and Prosser Park Facebook groups, petitions to this house and park activation initiatives.

The member for Bateman and I have received more than 1 300 individual communications in support of rezoning these parks and reserves to public open space. These communications have been delivered via a combination of petitions, survey responses, emails, phone calls, individual and group deputations and community forums. This extraordinary community campaign included two petitions tabled in the Legislative Assembly, with a total of 1 218 signatures, plus an online petition of 135 signatures, two community surveys totalling 145 responses, multiple emails and four well-attended community meetings. The feedback has been extensive, expansive and always heartfelt, and I thank everyone for their participation.

I think it is fitting that I share with members just a few of their comments, including, according to my notes —

“Parks offer a place of quiet reflection in these crazy pandemic times. It is lovely to be among the trees and hear the busy bird life that the trees attract.”

“These parks are an important escape from the built-up neighbourhoods that we now have and which are slowly increasing in density. Our park provides a great sense of wellbeing and connection to the life of our community.”

This one speaks to the historical significance of Harry Clemens Reserve —

“I grew up playing there with the other kids on the block. My kids played there and exercised our dogs there and now I'm happy seeing the younger generations utilising and enjoying the park.”

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge those who are watching this grievance online today and thank them for their commitment and efforts to protect their parks. Thank you, minister, for hearing this grievance today. I respectfully ask for your support on this matter.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Planning) [9.39 am]: I thank the member for Bicton for the grievance. I know that the member for Bateman has also received a number of petitions on the issue of the proposed rezoning of parcels of land in the City of Melville.

As I understand it, the city has proposed the rezoning of approximately 20 parcels of land from residential to public purpose use. The majority of those pieces of land are owned by the state government; they are crown land that is

vested with the city. That proposal has been put to the state. In making decisions about the rezoning of land, it is always good to make sure that we investigate all different aspects of it, in particular to make sure that the land is being used for public purposes, that it is well maintained and that other organisations that occupy the land, such as the scout hall that I understand is on one of these pieces of land, can remain there should the land be rezoned. In making these decisions, it is always very important to get across the detail and seek further community feedback. That is why, as part of the decision-making process, I sought feedback from the member for Bicton and the member for Bateman and asked them to talk to their communities to really understand the value of these parcels of land to their communities. As we know, these areas can and do play a very important role in the total amenity of a suburb, particularly established suburbs. There are significant active playing fields in many areas, but, in this instance, we have the benefit of some established trees and parkland that help in providing good community amenity and good local access. These are places that kids can play if they do not have a big backyard. In some of those areas that the member outlined where there is significant density, it also helps to support new families that move into the area. They do play an important role.

After both receiving the petition from the member for Bateman yesterday and listening to the member for Bicton's grievance today, I will take on board all that feedback. We will be meeting to discuss this again in the next three to four weeks and I will be able to make a decision about the rezoning of that land. As I said, the majority of it is state government owned and vested with the council, so we will want assurances that it will be kept as public open space but will also be well maintained to ensure that these parcels of land are safe places for the local community.

I thank the member for Bicton for her grievance. I accept her grievance. From the feedback that she has given me, both in the formal setting of Parliament and informally in the corridors of Parliament and in the meetings we have had, I understand the importance of these parks to the community. I thank her and the member for Bateman for their work. We will continue to discuss this issue before a final decision is made.