

METROPOLITAN REGION SCHEME (BEELIAR WETLANDS) BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 24 June.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [4.20 pm]: Thank you, Acting President, for the opportunity to speak to this very important bill. The bill is also very disappointing for reasons that I will outline in a moment, but mainly because the government is not really following the appropriate process for making a major change to the metropolitan region scheme. I will give a bit of background as I lead into my main points. In land use planning, there are three basic principles that we should adhere to: efficiency, transparency and predictability. This government gets an A for efficiency with this process. I have to give it an A because it has completely trashed the planning process just to ram through an outcome. It now has the numbers in this house to ram it through without proper consideration, appropriate analysis or appropriate consultation with experts in the community.

Everybody knows the background to this. I am sure that members opposite will say that it was an election promise in 2017 that they would remove this section of regional road reservation from the MRS forever and protect the Beeliar wetlands as a result. That is all very fine. That was probably worked up by a small group of people from the Labor Party doing a few war games to swing a few of the green votes its way in the South Metropolitan Region back in 2016. I am sure that is how it was all worked out. I am sure there was no thorough analysis of the infrastructure and transport requirements of Western Australia.

This bill has obviously made its way to this place before and been defeated, even though the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA together did not have the numbers to defeat it. Some very good and wise people on the crossbenches in this place in the previous Parliament thought it was worthy of being defeated and that this area in red on the map, which is part of our metropolitan region scheme and a very important part of our infrastructure corridor, should remain.

We have before us a bill that is incredibly efficient. As I said, the government gets 10 out of 10 for efficiency. The bill is about three pages long and has a very high level map. The second reading speech was three pages long. It said very little, other than that it is a great idea. I am paraphrasing. It references the Stephenson–Hepburn plan, which is 60 years old and therefore out of date. That sounds familiar, does it not? The same sorts of comments have been made about regional representation. The rules that are in place to safeguard our state are old and should therefore be wiped away because the government now has the numbers to do so! This is the sum total of the second reading speech. We have all seen it. Here is the explanatory memorandum—this detailed piece of analysis is one page long. It will wipe away forever, apparently, the possibility that an essential piece of infrastructure will be built to ensure the safety and efficiency of our community. Members opposite may have got an A for efficiency in trashing the planning system, but they certainly do not get an A for maintaining the economy.

There is a scheme. I am sure that members of the Labor Party have sat down and done some wargaming on this and thought: how can we make sure that we stop this road forever? I can tell members that it is not with this bill; it is not with the two or three pages of legislation before us. It is part of a different plan. It is part of the other bit that is mentioned in the second reading speech, which states —

The next stage of the process, —

This is the kicker —

after the bill has passed, will take place through a standard metropolitan region scheme amendment to engage on rezoning the remaining 84 hectares of land located to the west of North Lake Road that is currently designated as a primary regional road.

That is what is going on here. We know what the Labor government is up to, because it has done it all before. It is *deja vu*. We seem to be living in some sort of parallel universe. It is *deja vu*. My old boss Hon John Day had something to say about this back in 2015. Everyone I have talked to from both sides of the house thought he was a fine, honourable and thoughtful person. As his former chief of staff, I can say that he was very meticulous about the processes in the planning system and how to manage them. He was very meticulous in ensuring that people could have their say and that there was a proper assessment of the pros and cons before a decision was made. I will quote what he said on 11 November 2015, and, by the way, according to *Hansard*, he said it numerous times. In relation to the Roe 8 extension and the MRS scheme amendment, he said —

Fortunately, the previous Labor government, in its planning vandalism in removing the Fremantle eastern bypass, did not remove this reservation from the region scheme.

Fortunately, we know the history of the Fremantle eastern bypass, do we not? We know the problems with transport for our major piece of economic infrastructure—the inner harbour of Fremantle port. That port delivers 750 000 20-foot or equivalent units of containers, which are vital for our state. We know the huge challenges of getting

those containers and other goods in and out of that port. It has such huge constrictions. Former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, who is still here after all this time, undertook what was, according to another comment made by John Day, one of the greatest acts of planning vandalism undertaken in the state and here we go again—*deja vu*.

I am sure that the people of Western Australia would not mind so much if there was just a modicum of analysis, a modicum of assessment or a modicum of following the process. I can see Hon David Caddy there—I hope I have not said his father's name and mixed it up!—with a little grin. I am sure he knows about these things because he understands the planning system. I can see that. A modicum of analysis would be great but, instead, a three-page bill has been put before us to wipe out the section to the west of Beeliar Road.

I come back to the point I was making, which came out of the mouth of the minister acting on behalf of Minister Saffioti, the Minister for Planning, about the next stage of the process.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2157.]