

PERTH PARKING MANAGEMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms R. Saffioti (Minister for Transport)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.39 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The current Perth Parking Management Act 1999 was introduced in 1999 to help manage parking and the related growth of traffic congestion in the city centre and surrounding network. The current act does this by requiring all non-residential parking bays in use in the Perth parking management area to be licensed and for licence fees—the Perth parking levy—to be payable on all fee-liable bays. Funds raised by the levy are directly reinvested in improving transport in Perth's central area, with initiatives such as the popular central area transit, or CAT, bus services and the CBD free-transit zone. The current act also established the Perth parking policy, which works to progressively constrain the growth of non-residential parking over the longer term as the CBD expands and redevelops.

Over the past 20 years, the current act, regulations and parking policy have played an important role in reducing car trips to the city and limiting the growth of inner-city traffic congestion. When the policy was introduced, roughly 66 per cent of trips into the CBD were made by car; that number has now reduced to around 45 per cent. In the same period, the percentage of people using public transport to travel into the CBD has increased from 30 per cent to 45 per cent. More people now choose to use public transport or walk or cycle to travel to and around the CBD.

In more recent years, we have used the levy to fund new transport projects and services that help better connect and activate the city. These include the introduction of the purple CAT bus service that links the University of Western Australia and Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre to the CBD, and the new causeway pedestrian and cycling bridges across the Swan River. In short, the current act has served us well, achieving good transport outcomes that contribute to an active and attractive city centre. But it has increasingly become clear that we need a new modern act that will keep pace with a growing city and address the current and future challenges that the Perth CBD faces.

The City of Perth is aiming to treble its residential population to 90 000 residents by 2050. The government is responding to some of these challenges through investment in key inner-city projects to re-energise and re-invigorate the city centre. The new state-of-the-art Edith Cowan University campus in the heart of the city is one of those projects that will help to dramatically reshape the Perth CBD. We also have plans to build a CBD-based primary school in East Perth to attract families and others to live and work in the city centre. We have chosen a city site as the preferred location for a world-class Aboriginal cultural centre for WA. We need to keep building on this investment and activity to create an attractive, vibrant and economically successful city centre. This is why this bill seeks to replace the old rigid legislation and to propose a new Perth Parking Management Act as contemporary and more flexible legislation that better supports businesses while helping to drive new activity across the city.

As the minister responsible for the existing legislation, I have received numerous calls over years for initiatives that simply could not be accommodated within the existing legislative provisions. For example, when COVID hit, it was very difficult to easily support businesses in the city through fee waivers. Proponents of new developments some distance from the city centre called for differential rates to support new developments, which again could not be accommodated. Other proponents have wanted more certainty about the application of the policies earlier in the development time frame. The existing legislation was just too prescriptive and did not provide the flexibility to support business in the area.

A number of new initiatives will be introduced to help support businesses and landowners. New provisions will allow different fees to be calculated according to several factors, including a property's location within the Perth parking management area. This will open the door to setting different rates of the levy according to where non-residential parking is located. Parking in outer areas of the city generally has less impact on inner-city traffic congestion and people walking, cycling or catching public transport than parking in the city's central area.

During the COVID pandemic, it became clear that the current act has no mechanism to allow the state government to waive the levy during times of difficulty and hardship. New provisions proposed in this bill will help licence holders facing exceptional circumstances, such as pandemics and other states of emergency, by providing for temporary exemptions to the levy to be made. Additionally, as a way of encouraging new development and investment in some of the city's more underdeveloped areas, the new act will also provide for the levy to be waived for up to three years to help encourage the development of land in select locations.

On certainty for developers, current applications for licences that are not consistent with the Perth parking policy can be approved by the minister on the recommendation of the Department of Transport. Typically, this approval is sought at the development application stage, many years before a development is complete and a licence for the parking bays is required. The bill will introduce the concept of pre-approval for these types of applications. This means that property developments and prospective building tenants can be confident that parking approved at the planning development stage can be licensed once that development is complete, regardless of changes in government policies.

The bill also proposes provisions to better clarify how parking for special events and other types of temporary parking, such as vehicles servicing construction sites in the city, may be approved for use without licensing or other regulatory red tape. The current penalties for breaches of the act have not been changed since the current act's introduction in 1999 and have not kept pace with the tenfold increases in licence fees since that time. A new graduated penalty scheme, in line with the scale of offences, will ensure ongoing compliance with the act and will address potential risks to future compliance and revenue. I am pleased to report that voluntary compliance with the current act has been, and remains, extremely high. These changes will therefore impact only a small number of recidivist offenders and will improve fairness for all central Perth landowners who are doing the right thing. In response to stakeholders' feedback on transparency, the bill also proposes a legislative requirement that the Department of Transport publish details on expenditure from the Perth parking area account in its annual report.

As a result of many years' work and conversations with stakeholders, the bill also proposes important machinery-of-government improvements to the act's administration. These changes will help streamline business practices and reduce red tape for the many property owners, developers and other stakeholders who play a key role in improving and regenerating the city centre. No change is proposed to the current treatment of residential parking. Permanent city residents will continue to be exempt from a requirement to licence their parking or pay the levy. Existing exemptions from the levy will also continue to apply, including the provision that small businesses and other property owners using five or fewer parking bays are not required to pay licence fees.

Although transport is key to supporting a growing city, we believe that activating the city for its many residents, visitors and workers is also critical. For this reason, the bill proposes that the purposes of the levy be expanded to fund not just transport projects, but projects that deliver significant social and economic benefits to the parking management area and improve overall urban amenity. New facilities and infrastructure that benefits the city's overall population also indirectly provides transport benefits by reducing many people's need to travel through and out of the CBD.

Like the current act, this bill proposes that the spending of the levy be primarily restricted to the same area in which it is raised. However, there will be greater flexibility to fund ancillary infrastructure and services outside of the parking management area, when needed, to support delivery of other funded transport initiatives—for example, a new cycle path or bridge that concludes outside the parking management area. However, the area must be contiguous to the Perth parking management area boundary and the project must be primarily within, and for the benefit of, the Perth parking management area.

The bill will also specifically exclude events from being funded; however, it will allow for contributions to traffic management costs for those events.

I have now covered the key changes to the current act that are proposed in this bill. New regulations and a new Perth parking policy, to be developed in consultation with relevant local government authorities and other key city stakeholders, will support these legislative reforms.

In conclusion, I believe that this new act will play a key part in improving access to the city for everyone and deliver clear social and economic outcomes that are critical to help regenerate Perth's CBD as a vibrant, attractive and active public realm. I commend this bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Dr D.J. Honey**.