

*Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs — Fifty-ninth Report —
Overview of petitions 3 December 2021 to 30 June 2022 — Motion*

Resumed from 13 September on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Foster —

That the report be noted.

Hon DAN CADDY: I will continue my remarks on the fifty-ninth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs and recap what I said previously. I referred specifically to petition 35 and I spoke about the history of the site known as Subiaco East. I mentioned the damning words of Gareth Parker when he condemned the local government of the area for the demise of Subiaco, and its lack of action to make anything happen prior to 2017. I named a few outstanding councillors who were elected in 2017, including former councillors Derek Nash, Jodie Mansfield and Matt Davis who, amongst others, absolutely reinvigorated the area. The green shoots of development that we see now are in no small part due to their actions.

I wanted to address the petition of the time, and the principal petitioner, and the faux concern about the lack of public open spaces. I refer here to a page of the council agenda from August 2019. It refers to a report by Cardno that was undertaken at the time and the equivalent active open space. The McGowan government said, “We will keep the entire coverage of Subiaco Oval.” That increased the equivalent active open space per resident by 25 per cent in one hit—though the numbers are not important. That happened in 2017. In November 2019, the state government survey results came in. This is interesting because the people pushing this petition would have us believe that there was a groundswell of opposition to what was going on and that people were not happy with what was going on. A PerthNow article from 22 November, 2019 is really interesting. The old guard in Subiaco, like I said, would have everyone believe that this was somehow something nobody wanted. The PerthNow article states —

Over the past 18 months, the State Government has conducted an on-line survey, sent to 23,000 households, businesses and visitors, hosted community pop-up sessions attended by more than 180 local residents and undertaken extensive engagement around plans for Subi East ...

The independent ... survey found more than 70 per cent —

That is seven, zero—70 per cent —

of people were positive about the Subi East project.

The article quotes former Minister for Planning, Rita Saffioti, and says —

Subi East will be one of the most significant Western Australian urban redevelopment projects ever undertaken, and will see the transformation of 35ha of land on the doorstep of the Perth CBD into a thriving community focused inner-city village ...

I thank those named councillors again. I also thank them for what happened next. In December that year there was a watershed moment for Subiaco when the local planning scheme, LPS5, was approved by then Minister for Planning, Hon Rita Saffioti. The scheme saw the City of Subiaco attain 95 per cent of what it had asked the state government for. That is unheard of and in stark contrast to its neighbours who decided not to negotiate. We will not talk about what happened to the City of Nedlands. Keeping the proposed density out of the suburbs of Subiaco and Shenton Park, the suburban areas, was the knowledge that the new Subi East development would absorb much of the density being required by the government.

The constant petitioning and angst from a minority of the community around this issue is fascinating, given the results of the survey and given what is happening there and given how important it is to everything else that the city at that time managed to achieve. Adding to that history, we now have one of the most incredible, modern inner-city high schools possible near that Subi East development: Bob Hawke College. Hon Sue Ellery opened it as Minister for Education in 2020. I think I said in my contribution last week that the second stage has recently opened.

In June 2020, Minister Saffioti opened the Subiaco Oval playing surface to the general public for the first time in decades, as was promised by this government. For the first time in decades, any member of the public could go and kick a footy, or a soccer ball, or whatever is their wont, on what was the hallowed playing surface of Subiaco Oval.

Finally, I wanted to talk about the petition. I mentioned the “old guard” earlier. That is a phrase that is used a lot around that area, and people generally know what we are talking about. We are talking about that group of people in the community, many of them either on or directly influencing council over the years, who made sure nothing happened—that nothing in the area got done. Those people made sure that there was absolutely zero negotiation with the Barnett government about what it was going to do when football left, and all that stuff. When I started my speech last week, I think I said that when the newly elected council came into existence in 2017, there was still money in the budget to combat or fight losing football from Subiaco, when the new stadium’s foundations were already being laid. That is how backwards thinking it was, with a complete lack of any sort of proactivity.

I found the wording in this petition quite interesting, because it says —

The wishes of the community today are not different to those expressed over a century ago.

That sums up exactly what I have been saying. It goes on to talk about the reserve being returned to the people as it was vested in Subiaco in 1904 and refers to Premier Henry Daglish. That is fascinating. This goes so much to the mentality and the driving force of these people who really want to pull everything back and make sure that nothing happens in that area. They may want to know that just recently, at the Urban Development Institute of Australia awards night, the main award that is given out on the night for absolute excellence—I am not sure of its name—was awarded to ONE Subiaco, the new Blackburne development. It is a fantastic new development on that market site that the Subiaco council, prior to 2017, would not approve or let anything happen at that site. Credit to Blackburne.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Before I give the call, I will just point out we are continuing to have tech issues, and on the digital clocks members will notice that for this session “motion” will be the speaking time and “debate” will be the time left on the report.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I know some other members want to speak, so I might not take up my entire time, but I rise to make a brief contribution to the fifty-ninth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. I refer to petition 42, for which I notice the deputy chair (Hon Stephen Pratt) was the tabling member. It was from the principal petitioner, Debra Moran, about Department of Communities housing in Karawara. I thought I might give members an update on what is happening in Karawara and look back at the response from the committee at the time. The petition was tabled on 15 December 2021. The committee wrote to the minister and the minister responded with a number of dot points. Locals being reminded that the state government would be investing \$2.1 billion in social housing over the next four years was probably not the response the people of Karawara were interested in. That is what the minister led with. He then said how hard it is to meet the significant demand for housing and reminded the residents of Karawara that the majority of public housing tenants abide by their tenancy agreement with no complaints or concerns reported. That is obvious and beside the point. The Department of Communities considered a suite of practical measures to alleviate concerns of disruptive behaviour, particularly in Bunderra Close. The report states —

This has included the recent temporary installation of a CCTV camera to manage disruptive behaviour and vandalism at properties.

I will have to check whether the temporary installation of that camera has, in fact, continued. What has continued is the very disappointing amount of antisocial behaviour and, in fact, crime in that part of Karawara. When this item was up for consideration last week, I rang Debra Moran that morning to check in. I have spoken to her a number of times over the last couple of years about how things are travelling in Karawara. The news was not particularly good. There has recently been an arson attack at a house, and she tells me that that is the third arson attack in the last number of years. A five-kilogram weight was thrown through the front window of a house, with a mum and two young girls in the house at the time. The residents are still fearful of moving about, particularly in that Bunderra Close part of Karawara. I thought I might read an email that I received from Debra on 18 November 2021, which gives a bit of the background about what has been happening in Karawara and the locals’ response. It states —

The Karawara community group was formed June 2020 after a family in Lowan Street Karawara’s home had an attempted burglary while the tenants were home and the “perpetrators” come back while they were home and smashed windows and threatened them. To the point they felt so insecure in their rental they moved out of the area.

...

From this meeting the KAG has had numerous meeting with the Mayor who supports us 100%, local members or parliament ...

I know that Hon Kate Doust, who is away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, has been involved in that community, as well as Department of Communities representatives. The email continues —

The area has had murders, arson, burglaries ... break ins, drug deals and Meth heads just walking around smashing peoples front windows for something to so.

We have had off duty police officers who live in the area end up in hospital because Dv victims sit on his lawn so they don’t get beaten up, then the perpetrator came back after him and they both ended up bloodied and in hospital.

I met that particular gentleman in his home, and he obviously is very disappointed by the standard of violence and antisocial behaviour in that community.

The bad news is that not much has changed in the almost two years since this petition was tabled. The installation of that temporary CCTV camera has apparently done nothing to impact the level of crime and antisocial behaviour. The minister is trying on social housing, but in Karawara there are some issues around the 24 per cent concentration

of social housing and the design of the streets in that suburb. There is a nasty number of cul-de-sacs, which can work in some circumstances, but in this part of the world they do not appear to and the locals want some action.

At this stage, nothing has happened. Again, as I mentioned, I spoke to Debra last week and they had recently been back in touch with Minister Carey to try to find a way through the situation in their area. At this stage, nothing has happened. That is very disappointing and I would not be surprised if we see another petition coming our way in the very near future.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am motivated to speak in response to some of the comments of Hon Dan Caddy, because despite the commentary in this place, even when away on urgent parliamentary business, I do listen to the speeches that are going on in the chamber as I try to do the multiple tasks that we have before us in our very busy lives. I was a bit surprised with some of the commentary by Hon Dan Caddy concerning the petition on the Subiaco A-class reserve. There is a problem at the moment with the government. We see increasing desperation, to the point at which we almost have this basket-of-deplorables-type moment for everybody who does not agree entirely with the position of the government, in this case 2 134 signatories. They do not fall down to the exact line and agree entirely, as we discussed in an earlier segment, of those factional warlords across the union movement. What we have seen in recent days is an activation of the other place. I am sure there is some preselection going on over there, because they all seem to be coming out with it and making a point.

I get to the point in relation to this petition. There are genuine concerns in the community about intensive development. Do I agree with everything the petitioners say? Not necessarily. In fact, in my role as the chief of staff to the Minister for Planning in 2008, I had a big role relating to the selection of the new Perth Stadium site. At that time, John Langoulant's report and a few others from the AFL suggested redevelopment. There was also a report that suggested East Perth power station. We know we chose an incredible site for the stadium. A great and iconic development was done under the Barnett government, and it freed up land for development in Subiaco. Some of the concerns need to be listened to. This is part of the theme of hubris of the government; it should listen to people and not label them as somehow backward or a tiny minority or whatever. I respect the 2 144 people who have put their point of view. This petition was handwritten. As far as I can tell from the signatures, the vast majority of those people were in the immediate vicinity. We are seeing a breakdown the community's trust in the planning process. I saw in the most recent report by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation that there has been an incredible breakdown in the number of planning schemes referred to the Environmental Protection Authority. That says only one thing. Again I refer to my time as chief of staff to the minister. I made sure, with the minister's agreement, that we worked very hard to make sure that we were not the bottleneck for planning schemes that had to be signed off by the minister after they had been considered by the WAPC. We did comparisons between former minister MacTiernan and us. I was monitoring that very closely because strategic planning is a core fundamental issue of our planning system. Having those strategic plans whereby we engage with the community means we bring them along in the process. It is just like the inquiry by design that was undertaken by Hon John Day when he did that work on the Cottesloe foreshore. That incredible piece of work was undertaken. That does not mean to say that it does not get reviewed, but it should always be in the context of consultation. That is when consultation should occur. That is where we break down that feeling of mistrust and concern. That is when we get people on board and avoid having these petitions in the future.

We see a government with a habit of "It's my way or the highway", particularly with the former Minister for Planning Hon Rita Saffioti, MLA, who just basically, as far as I can tell, could not care less about strategic planning. She was the one who introduced the state development assessment unit whereby there is no obligation to give due consideration to those planning schemes. Then we see a raft of development proposals well above what has been agreed to by the community. I am a very strong supporter of higher density. We mentioned the ONE Subiaco development, which is a great development in a great location. It was supported by the joint development assessment panel and it was supported in approvals. It had bipartisan support. We could have done a lot more at Subiaco station if we had got the community over the line. I recall a meeting, sitting with former Treasurer Eric Ripper and the former Minister for Planning, when I was a public servant, when there was a discussion about the lack of density at that low site. There was and still is an opportunity to do more within walking distance of that site. We see problems raised, and the part I agree with in this petition is —

- Rejection of the City of Subiaco's orderly planning by Development WA's ad-hoc decision-making ...

There are parts of that I probably do not entirely agree with, but the sentiment around ad hoc is a concern. If we just take out all the rest, the ad hoc decision-making is starting to trouble the community. The government needs to take ownership of this concern and start to focus on engaging better with the community at those early stages.

Through DevelopmentWA, there will be some challenges, and they need to be out in the open. I came to this place with a question on the Princess Margaret site because 1 100-odd car bays will be on that site. I asked for the traffic modelling. What did I get? I got traffic modelling that looked at the impact of the egress and ingress of that site and the delay coming off Roberts Road and onto Thomas Street. That was it. I do not see in the public domain—I would be delighted to be wrong and have someone show it to me—an overarching strategic plan for our transport network

across the western suburbs. Where is a clear assessment of the transport demand over the longer term? That would give people some comfort about whether we are achieving that. What do we see? When we look at the traffic monitoring at Crawley, at the bay not far from the brewery site where they monitor —

Hon Dan Caddy interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Go and look at trafficmap, honourable member. I am making the point that we see a decline and an absolute collapse in the use of cycleways. There has been an absolute collapse in the patronage of cycleways in Western Australia. It is because this minister could not care less.

Several members interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Go and look at the data. There is something going on. Notwithstanding the \$13 billion spend on Metronet, we still see a failure to achieve any increase on the old patronage data from before the COVID pandemic. We see that this government has just let it rip and does it ad hoc. It does not care what the community thinks. When they come along, it will call them the “basket of deplorables”—maybe not those words exactly. That is what the government is effectively saying. The government is saying that. It is saying that they are just somehow out of date and a tiny minority. The government should listen to the concerns of the community, engage with them through the strategic planning processes, respect the local governments, respect the planning system and respect that multi-tiered system and focus. Yes, by all means reduce red tape, but focus on each step in the process, the hard work of planning and making sure that the systems in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage are up to date and using the latest technology so that we can keep track—accountability comes with it—of those proposals. We need to ensure that we have a plan and a vision for the City of Perth for where that density will go so that we can get out of this sprawling city and move to higher density development in the right locations with the endorsement and support that also makes the most of our wonderful environment, tree cover and all those things. Do not cut corners and do not yell at the people of Western Australia.

Hon DAN CADDY: There are only six minutes to go, but I will respond to that. I wanted to speak to petition 32 but I will respond to that. I know Hon Neil Thomson was talking about the City of Perth and Crawley and areas that are nothing to do with it; I know he is not a details guy but we will get to it. I am pretty much finished on the basket case that Subiaco council was under the old guard prior to 2017.

Several members interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: Unfortunately, it looks like it is back in control, but I do not think it will be able to destroy the good work done between 2017 and 2021.

I listened intently to the member’s contribution and the points he made around the 2 144 signatures, and that is a reasonable number. If the member had been listening to me, he would have heard that our consultation went to 23 000 people, including business owners and a lot of others. The member was talking about slightly less than 10 per cent, but that is fine. But what the member said, or more what the member did not say, really backs up exactly what I was saying, because I noted that the member talked about meetings that he had with the Premier’s office and Minister Day, I think, the fine minister that he was —

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: I understand that. I understand that he did. Some great people worked in his office. I noticed that the member did not refute one of the core things that I said. When we go back to when all this happened and football was going to move from Subiaco—I love the new stadium too—and Subi East was on the cards, one of my core criticisms of the local government at the time was that it refused to be proactive. It refused to go out and meet with the government and the Premier of the day, Hon Colin Barnett, and put its case for why football should be kept there, or for what it could get out of the state government as a result of losing football, and how all that could be done. The member’s government did not interact with that local government, and personally I do not blame the previous government, but it was not proactive either; it did not go forward in that space.

I think I have said enough about this. I am not going to talk about cycleways in Crawley and the City of Perth, because that is really outside the scope of what we are talking about. I want to quickly go to petition 32 of the fifty-ninth report; I have detailed knowledge of this petition. It is around the desire for an RAAF memorial in Kings Park. In my previous life I had conversations with the principal petitioner; I think I actually met with her on one occasion. She was absolutely passionate about this, and I totally understood where that was coming from for her, but it may surprise some in this chamber to know that I was not an advocate for that memorial. I supported the Korean War Memorial; in fact, only a few weeks ago I ran into my friend Fay Duda and we talked about the journey that the committee had gone on and everything else. I had little to do with it, really, but I did advocate for it.

One memorial that I have been very involved with is a memorial to the Battle of Crete. I have been very involved with the committee. I have had numerous discussions with the committee and have worked with it on finding solutions to some of the obstacles that have been put in its way. That memorial is now pretty much ready to go; the committee is dealing with the sculptors and everyone else involved. Only the other night I talked about Arthur Leggett, OAM,

and his link with the Battle of Crete. This is a really important memorial for Western Australia, and that is why I supported it—because it was a significant battle in our history. The number of casualties, including prisoners of war, was huge for one battle. We are talking about greater numbers than Australia's entire participation in the Korean War and not far shy of the numbers involved in the Tobruk campaign. It is really important.

If I remember correctly, the issue that the lead petitioner had with this memorial is that when she started it was about the RAF, the RCAF and the RAAF all together, and there is already a memorial in Kings Park for that—the State War Memorial. That is there for the Australian Defence Force, which includes the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Australian Air Force and, obviously, the Australian Army. That is why I did not support that memorial and I still do not support it. I remember speaking at the time about this with the then relevant minister, Hon Stephen Dawson: the threshold for getting a memorial into Kings Park is high; it needs to be important, and other places around the world have similar thresholds. For example, at Arlington National Cemetery in the US there is only one foreign vessel with a memorial, and that is HMAS *Perth*. Again, HMAS *Perth* is linked with the Battle of Crete, and that shows how incredibly important that memorial is for Perth. Memorials that pay homage to one of the three services really need to be considered in the context of the fact that we have a State War Memorial; that is what it is there for.

Consideration of report postponed, pursuant to standing orders.