

RESERVES (NATIONAL PARKS AND CONSERVATION PARKS) BILL 2004

Second Reading

Resumed from 20 October.

MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood) [12.41 pm]: Yesterday, I got halfway through making my contribution to this debate. At that time, I had indicated to the House that in my opinion the Government was rushing into the Parliament this legislation to create national parks, to fulfil a promise it had made at the last election. I indicated that the Bill did not cover the number of national parks that the Government had promised, that the legislation was brought on in great haste by the Government to placate its virtual coalition partners the Greens (WA), and that it had not been properly prepared. There is a lack of management plans, fire plans, dieback assessment and so on. The minister has since provided information on fire plans for areas not previously burnt and those proposed to be burnt in the next four years. There is still some concern that the Government has brought in this legislation in such a way as to imply that it is creating more national parks than is the case. In other words, in a number of proposals in this Bill the land is actually contiguous. Of the national parks proposed, Hilliger, Milyeannup, Butler and Blackwood are contiguous. My argument is that this is just an effort to placate the concerns of that section of the community that is very fond of creating national parks. We on this side of the Chamber have no objection to the creation of national parks, provided they are properly planned, sufficient funds are allocated for their management, and they are legitimate. Yesterday, I made the point that if, at the next election, our environmental spokesman said that we were going to create 13 new national parks, all we would need to do is split up the D'Entrecasteaux National Park into 13 parks. We could then create 13 new national parks just by giving them new names. In the lead-up to an election, when a party says it will create 30 new national parks it is expected to keep its word once in government. Under the Regional Forest Agreement, the previous coalition Government proposed 12 new national parks and 24 additions to national parks. If they are all added together, it comes to 31 new national parks if we include making just an addition to an existing national park. My real concern is that the second reading speech is only a page long -

Mr M. McGowan: Are you saying there are too many parks?

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I am not saying that at all. I hope the member for Rockingham will take part in the debate, because at the consideration in detail stage I would certainly like to tease out that issue. If the member had been listening, he would have heard me say that we on this side of the Chamber do not object to national parks. We are just saying that they should be properly planned. Many of these national parks are very large, and I will go into that later.

My concern is that we are charging ahead because of a political imperative rather than using a sound commonsense approach and practical planning. Many of these national parks have been proposed since 1984 and 1987. A lot of them were proposed during the RFA process, and others were also proposed by the current Labor Government under its old-growth forest policy. We need to examine these issues. If there has not been this great haste in the past to create national parks, why is there this great haste at the eleventh hour of this Parliament?

Last weekend, I fully intended to take some photographs of the dieback-affected areas of the Milyeannup, Hilliger and Butler blocks and table them in the Parliament. The question is that if a large part of those national parks is affected by dieback and those trees are going to die, why then would we place all that dieback-affected area into a national park? Would it not make more sense to harvest those trees and make use of them, because they are going to die anyway, and then make that area into a national park? This is not an insignificant issue. In her letter to me the other day, the minister admitted that we are putting dieback-affected areas into national parks. I acknowledge that some of the existing national parks already contain dieback-affected areas. However, we were provided with information on dieback and some of these new national park areas only about an hour before the debate on this Bill started.

The minister claimed that the last national parks Bill passed by the Parliament supposedly created nine new national parks - I think there were only five because some of them were additions.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr P.D. OMODEI: In the conclusion of the information that was provided to us and prepared in December 1999, the minister states in a letter to me that dieback information is virtually out-of-date after 12 months, and after three years the whole dieback assessment needs to be reconsidered. Boorara block, an area to be placed in a national park, has a total interpreted area of 539 hectares. The total area infested by *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is 240 hectares; almost half the total area. Of course, there is also some *Armillaria* fungus in some of those

national parks. We are putting aside a national park, half of which, based on 1999 figures, is affected by dieback. Is that really a sensible thing to do? That was an issue with the last Bill.

I turn now to the present Bill and the information provided by the minister, which really should have been made available a long time ago so that we could assess the Bills to see whether they should be considered seriously by the Parliament. The Butler block, which is being dealt with under this legislation, had its assessment completed on 18 June 1999. Under paragraph 4.3.1 and the heading "Current disease expression" of that 1999 assessment it states -

The disease expression was generally very good with most *P.c* infested sites displaying high impact. Within these sites more than 80% of the susceptible understory species being affected. These species include;

Banksia grandis, *Persoonia longifolia*, *Persoonia elliptica*, *Xanthorrhoea preissii*, *Xanthorrhoea gracilis*, *Leucopogon verticillatus*, . . . *Macrozamia redleii*, *Patersonia* spp . . .

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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