

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LAND AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2003

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan - Parliamentary Secretary) [5.12 pm]: Before we broke for afternoon tea, I was saying that Hon George Cash had given a good summary of the events that have occurred. I have put a number of amendments onto the notice paper on which we will seek to reach agreement between the Government and the Opposition to progress this Bill. For organisations like LandCorp, it is always good to get some sort of bipartisan support on how we move forward with legislation. LandCorp is not an organisation in which we want to have one side of the Parliament going in one direction, and then, when or if there is a change of government, the other side going in the other direction. Hopefully, we will be able to accommodate those amendments when we get to the committee stage. The passage of this Bill will be good for the private sector in that it will provide an increased opportunity for joint venturing between LandCorp and the private sector; I know that is something that the board is keen to do and it will be good to move forward.

In terms of a number of comments made by Hon Jim Scott, unfortunately, his desire with regard to contaminated sites, which was also shared by the Government, is unable to be accommodated on this occasion. Many of his other comments go beyond the scope of what this legislation can do. This legislation deals more with the directions and policies of LandCorp. LandCorp and government agencies such as the Department of Housing and Works assist in continuing to maintain affordability. Now is not the time to have the debate about the economic drivers of affordability of housing, but one of the areas concerned is supply. That is an area in which LandCorp is doing some good work in the regions by providing housing blocks in areas in which it would not necessarily be an economical thing for the private sector to do. LandCorp helps in that area to maintain affordability. The examples that Hon Jim Scott gave on the impact of marinas on surrounding land prices are very localised. There are not many marinas that make huge amounts of money, but where they are profitable and can be integrated, such as in Mandurah, that money is then reinvested into other areas to increase the affordability of housing. The profits that are made out of those areas are then used in other areas. Having said that, I accept the view that sometimes we have false economies in terms of driving people to live on the fringes of the urban environment, which may not necessarily be cheaper if they then have to commute into the city. Again, the provisions with which LandCorp will be working in terms of urban renewal will assist in providing affordability in some areas closer to the community.

Hon George Cash indicated the correspondence that he had previously received. I am aware of a further e-mail that was sent to Hon George Cash from the Urban Development Institute of Australia which indicated that it was prepared to support the amendments to the Bill as they stand and trusted that its support and that of the Property Council of Australia would allow safe passage of the Bill. UDIA also supported the inclusion of provisions on the remediation of contaminated sites, but I accept that other sections of the private sector do not support that. I am sure there will be a bit of debate on that issue as we go through the committee stage.

Again, I thank honourable members and I will make sure that Hon Jim Scott's comments are drawn to the attention of LandCorp and the minister. I share his concerns about affordability in principle if not in terms of how that is achieved. I concur with the principles of his argument. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Hon Barry House) in the Chair; Hon Ken Travers (Parliamentary Secretary) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1: Short title -

Hon JIM SCOTT: This week I have been dealing with a lot of Bills, and unfortunately I was not aware of the changes mentioned by the parliamentary secretary during the second reading debate. I understand that he will somehow reduce the ability for LandCorp to get involved with remediation in partnership with other bodies or private companies. Will the parliamentary secretary indicate the basis for those changes - which I like so much - and why they were made?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Firstly, the Government accepts the numbers in this place and that getting a Bill through the House requires agreement. The expansion of powers concerns contaminated sites. The Western Australian Land Authority currently operates in certain circumstances in respect of contaminated sites, but this legislation provides a broader scope, and, by deleting those provisions, the authority will still be able to do what it is currently doing; it just will not be able to go further. We tried to get common agreement and, as I mentioned

during the debate, it is important that an organisation such as WALA receive fairly strong bipartisan support from the Government and the main opposition parties for moving it forward. It would be silly for WALA to get heavily involved in contaminated sites and, if there were to be a change of government, for the new Government to not go down that path.

The other comment I would make is that I did speak to Hon Jim Scott about this Bill some time ago. At that stage he indicated that he had some concerns with other provisions of the Bill. In order to effect passage of the Bill through this place, the opposition parties indicated that they were prepared to support the Bill with the deletion. The Government was prepared to accommodate that so the Bill could pass through the House.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I thank the parliamentary secretary for that clarification. I did not understand that I was ever going to oppose the Bill in its entirety. However, there were some changes that I was seeking. It is obvious that the parliamentary secretary's adding up does not really add up. I must say that I find this quite extraordinary; this very large change is based on not checking properly. The parliamentary secretary says the change is based not on the good management of the authority or whether it is a good thing for the authority to become involved in this. There is no mention of that. He is doing it because he believes - but did not check - that the Government might not get the numbers to get the Bill through the House. It seems quite extraordinary that the parliamentary secretary thought we would not provide the Government with back-up for LandCorp being involved with contaminated sites. I find quite extraordinary the idea that such an important change is based on such little discovery on the part of the Government. Even more extraordinary is that the Government is making such an important change without even trying to get the legislation through as it was. I am indicating now that the Government can get the legislation through without making that change. I do not understand the rest of the argument. The Government did not think it could get the Bill through without the support of the Opposition. Apart from being wrong, I think it is a very poor reason because it is very clear to me - as I stated previously - that the importance of allowing LandCorp to be involved in this is to ensure orderly planning of those areas that contain contaminated sites. For the Government to overturn on a whim the ability to have orderly planning is, quite frankly, a disgrace. I think there is a bit more to this. I wonder whether pressure might be coming from other directions and the Government may be buckling at the knees.

Hon Norman Moore: Are you upset that you are not the only one who ever exerts any pressure?

Hon JIM SCOTT: No. I did not think I put much pressure on the Government at all.

Hon Norman Moore: There are only three of you; do you think you should be running the country?

Hon JIM SCOTT: I did not think there was any pressure on this at all. However, I did say there were a few issues that I was concerned about. I would like to know why the Opposition does not want LandCorp to be involved in cleaning up contaminated sites. I would not mind hearing the Leader of the Opposition get up and say why it is a bad idea for LandCorp to be doing that, other than perhaps the Opposition is looking after somebody's interests and that there is worry about the competition.

Hon Norman Moore: You can't help yourself, can you?

Hon JIM SCOTT: No, I cannot.

Hon Norman Moore: You always have to make some snide remark. By the way, whose pocket are you in Mr Scott? Who pays your bills?

Hon JIM SCOTT: I do not happen to be running around looking after particular people. I look after the wider interests of the community, which wants to see a proper clean up of these contaminated sites. They also want to see orderly planning. They do not want to see Governments jerked around by a handful of vested interests that run the Liberal Party.

Hon Norman Moore: Vested interests? Who do you think you represent in this place?

Hon JIM SCOTT: Can the Leader of the Opposition tell me who is pumping money into my campaign?

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, members!

Hon Norman Moore: He is just a twit.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, it is nearly time to report. Members have strayed from clause 1.

Hon JIM SCOTT: This is a real sell-out by the Government. The community of Western Australia should understand that it is a sell-out. The Labor Party has said up-front that because the Liberal Party has said it does not like it, the Government is not worried about one of the most important things it said this Bill would do and which the Government had previously heralded.

Hon Ken Travers: Do you remember one of the conversations we had?

Hon JIM SCOTT: I said there were other aspects of the Bill about which I had a lot of concerns.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again.