

OLD CABLE STATION — COTTESLOE

Grievance

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [9.37 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Lands. I thank the minister for taking my grievance. My grievance relates to the proposed amendment to the metropolitan region scheme that seeks to rezone lot 556 Curtin Avenue. That lot is locally referred to as the Old Cable Station and includes the surrounding bushland. As the minister knows, I have given a similar grievance to the previous two ministers. It is very important and I hope the minister is aware of the information relating to this site. The site is owned by the state government and is listed on the state Register of Heritage Places. In more recent times, the buildings on the site were occupied by the former Department for Child Protection and Family Support until 2016 and known as the McCall Centre.

The purpose of the amendment is to transfer approximately 8 028 square metres of land in Cottesloe from the public purposes—special uses reservation to the urban zone in the metropolitan region scheme. The proposed urban zoning will enable the sale and redevelopment of the land. It has been stated that the rezoning will allow for the renewal and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings on it. This proposal has been with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage for some time, and public submissions closed in April 2022. It has been some 18 months since then and the local community is becoming anxious to hear what the government proposes for this site. I have raised this matter before, but I consider it sufficiently important to raise it with the new Minister for Planning; Lands to ensure the minister is aware of community concerns relating to redevelopment of the site. I hope community concerns are considered by the minister when decisions are made.

I want to make it very clear that I am not opposing the redevelopment of this site, and, like up the coast, it may be a site that is appropriate for some apartment developments. The preservation and redevelopment of the Old Cable Station would, if done properly, provide a community benefit, especially if any redevelopment is designed to draw people to the area. However, there is considerable community concern about the potential of land sales and development destroying the critical bushland and heritage that exists on lot 556. That is a concern I share.

A local community group Friends of Mosman Park Bushland, with the support of the Cottesloe Coastcare Association and both the Mosman Park and Cottesloe Residents and Ratepayers Associations, has advocated that the land around the Old Cable Station should be preserved from redevelopment. The bushland within lot 556 forms a crucial part of the green link that exists between the Indian Ocean at Mosman Beach and the Swan River at Milo Beach. The river to beach ecological link is unique in Western Australia and in Perth and has become known as Vlamingh Parklands. This link comprises Garungup Park, Minim Cove Park and the Chidley Point Reserve Bush Forever site. The unique tract of bushland provides a vital ecological link for rare and endangered flora and fauna that is unbroken by significant residential or commercial development. The area also provides a critical habitat for native fauna.

In that regard, I draw the minister's attention to the thriving colony of quenda at Minim Cove and the 18 bird species that use the bushland and associated water bodies. These include the white-browed scrubwren, the forest red-tailed and Carnaby's black-cockatoos, and the locally rare variegated fairy-wren. Of special interest is the rainbow bee-eater, a migratory bird that uses this area as its metropolitan habitats are vanishing. As the minister would be aware, small animals require nearly continuous bush coverage as they migrate. The existing bush link protects these native birds and mammals from predatory birds, cats and foxes by providing them with vital bush cover. Thus, as a vital remaining habitat for locally rare bird species and other small native fauna, it is vital that the Vlamingh Parklands ecological link remains protected. Although the area around the Old Cable Station itself is dominated by introduced Victorian tea-trees, the densely packed understory these trees provide creates an ideal breeding and feeding ground for small birds, particularly the white-browed scrubwren and the variegated fairy-wren.

Volunteers from Friends of Mosman Park Bushland, in conjunction with the Town of Mosman Park, have done an outstanding job progressively restoring and replanting the bushland through that area with endemic native flora. Therefore, the existence of some introduced flora around the Old Cable Station cannot, in good faith, be used as a justification for the destruction of this environmentally critical ecological link. The introduced flora has benefited the fauna as it provides a key breeding habitat and there is a demonstrated will and capacity within the community to progressively restore diverse indigenous flora to the bushland. If the whole area is sold for commercial development, the opportunity to maintain this unique ecological link between the river and the ocean—an ecological connection that protects and provides habitats for our local native flora and fauna—will be lost forever. I sincerely ask the minister to ensure that any development on lot 556 preserves enough bushland to ensure that the Vlamingh Parklands ecological link continues to function as a fauna habitat.

As per the *Leighton regional planning guidelines*, published in 2000, lot 556 is within the coastal foreshore reserve. Typically, a setback zone of 125 metres from the high-water mark is recommended. The setback creates a buffer against future coastal erosion and, for this reason, should not be built upon. That is certainly occurring to the south-west of the Old Cable Station. Lot 556 starts at just 60 metres from the high-tide mark of an already eroding

Mosman Beach. At some points along Curtin Avenue, there is as little as 40 metres to the high-water mark. In light of the erosion that is already occurring, the setback requirements must be considered in the development of the link.

The bush near the Old Cable Station is adjacent to the Vlamingh Memorial, reportedly the place where Europeans first landed in the Perth area in 1697. It is a significant historical site that should be maintained. Moreover, the area has a rich Aboriginal heritage. The site adjoins the heritage-listed Aboriginal camp at Minim Cove. Numerous Aboriginal artefacts have been found in the area and the limestone rocks and the reef immediately adjacent to that area have ceremonial significance to local Aboriginal people. There is also the mythological story about the seven hills in the area.

I appreciate that this site is an appropriate site for certain developments, but I implore the minister to give good consideration to maintaining the critical bush link in any redevelopment that occurs on the site.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Lands) [9.44 am]: I thank the member for his question. The member has given some history to the site. As people know, this land is owned by the state government. As the member identified, the land is occupied by the former Cottesloe cable station, which I note is on the state Register of Heritage Places. The buildings are currently unoccupied.

When giving consideration to a site or precinct it is the normal process to look at the zoning. If we wish to renew the site in any regard, we will give serious consideration to the zone. That is what the Western Australian Planning Commission has done. Before my time, it initiated a metropolitan region scheme amendment to rezone the site from a public purposes special use reservation to an urban zone. The idea behind that is that we facilitate some renewal of the precinct and, obviously, also the heritage-listed buildings, and activate the site through adaptive re-use.

As the member noted, that amendment went out to consultation. It generated strong interest and there were 270 submissions. There was a two-month period for public comment. I want to be very clear that the time frame taken is to be expected because scheme amendments and future planning of any precinct can take time. This is normal. I understand that the community may want things to move quicker, but things have to go through particular processes. It has done that. For example, the WAPC did advertise an amendment report that stated that a coastal hazard setback assessment was prepared for the site and it indicated that the site was not likely to be impacted by coastal processes over the 100-year planning time frame. As such, the proposed amendment is consistent with the requirements of the state planning policy 2.6 for coastal planning.

The member mentioned Aboriginal heritage. The site does intersect with two Aboriginal heritage sites. Noting that we are currently going through the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation, should the bill pass, any proponent or landowner would of course require an approval under proposed section 18 of the act before commencing any work. I want to note that the process of rezoning the land—the MRS amendment—is in itself not directly affected by the Aboriginal Heritage Act as changes to land use within that amendment are broad in nature and obviously do not physically interfere with the land.

Regarding conservation, this proposed amendment was referred to the Environmental Protection Authority for advice to see if an environmental assessment would be required. However, the EPA advised that the proposed amendment did not require formal assessment under the Environmental Protection Act. It advised that the site contained some remnant vegetation that could be considered in any future redevelopment of the site. I will wait for the advice of the WAPC and give careful consideration to a range of different policies, including the *State planning policy 2.8: Bushland policy for the Perth metropolitan region*, and any other relevant policies.

I want to be clear about what we imagine for the site into the future. I think everyone agrees that we would like to see re-use of the heritage buildings. Beyond that, I will wait and see. However, I want to say something about the design. Yesterday, the member respectfully had a crack at me and the government about it. I can actually point to a number of design reforms that will assist with any potential renewal of this precinct. In 2019, we brought in *State planning policy 7.0—Design of the built environment*. That is the lead policy that elevates the importance of design quality. We brought in a state design review panel for major development proposals. We brought in a design review guide for local governments. We brought in the state planning policy precinct design that provides guidance on good design, planning, assessment and implementation of precinct structure plans, local development plans and subdivision in the areas identified as precincts. I would suggest that that precinct design approach would be applied for any considerations for the renewal of this precinct. Of course, one that I personally worked on as the parliamentary secretary is the state planning policy 7.3 for the design of apartments and buildings. That demonstrates that we have made a breadth of changes and reforms, which I have personally worked on, to improve design outcomes for precincts like this in Western Australia.

I want to end on this: people see the word “urban”, but under a metropolitan region scheme amendment, urban can cover a large number of purposes. Obviously, it can be residential, civic or public open space, and it can be a mix of different uses. I am not jumping the gun here. I will wait for the advice of the Western Australian Planning

Commission. However, I note that under the previous minister and now me, the government is working for better precinct design.