

SWAN AND CANNING RIVERS MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Helen Morton (Minister for Mental Health)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Minister for Mental Health) [7.31 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill seeks to amend the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006 to support the amalgamation of the roles and functions of the Swan River Trust with the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This initiative will strengthen the management of Western Australia's environment and river parks by providing a more focused conservation and parks department. These proposed amendments will allow the management of the iconic Swan Canning Riverpark to be integrated with the conservation, protection and promotion of Western Australia's unique national parks, marine parks and reserves already managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

The bill will improve resourcing capacity and combine the expertise of the two agencies, as well as streamline existing arrangements and corporate services. The amendments will transfer the day-to-day operations and management functions of the Swan River Trust to the chief executive officer of the Department of Parks and Wildlife; more closely align the functions of the Swan River Trust with those of similar vesting and advisory bodies; and transfer current staff of the trust to the Department of Parks and Wildlife. All existing functions of the Swan River Trust have been retained, with decision-making responsibility and operational management to be transferred to the parks and wildlife CEO. All planning and river management functions will continue, with no loss of focus on this important river system. The Swan River Trust will remain as an advisory body to the Minister for Environment, and will continue to provide high level, independent advice on the protection of the river and related developments as well as reporting on the state of the development control area.

The Swan River Trust under the existing act has a range of functions, including decision-making roles on policies, development approvals, operational activities, and financial management. This bill will amend the Swan River Trust's role to primarily focus on advice on development matters, strategic directions and reporting requirements. The majority of operational and development approval functions will be transferred to the CEO of the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This will align the Swan River Trust's role more closely with that of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and the Western Australian Conservation Commission as a result of changes being made to the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984.

Under the amendments, the Swan River Trust will have the following functions: developing policies for the protection and enhancement of ecological and community benefit and amenity; establishing targets for ecological and community benefits and amenity of Riverpark; preparing and dealing with strategic documents; advising the CEO of the Department of Parks and Wildlife on matters relating to development; advising the CEO of the Department of Parks and Wildlife on promoting the activities of other bodies having functions in the catchment affecting the Riverpark; reporting to the Minister for Environment on the state of the development control area, and development on and adjoining the development control area; providing advice to planning authorities so that proper provision can be made in planning schemes for reservation of land; and providing advice and promoting public education on matters relevant to functions. These functions are similar to functions of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and the Conservation Commission, both of which are vesting bodies with varying responsibilities for the care and management of the land within their remit.

Powers that are proposed to be conferred on the CEO of the Department of Parks and Wildlife that previously were with the Swan River Trust include: management of river reserve and Riverpark shoreline, including responsibility for leases and licences; responsibility for protecting and enhancing the ecological and community benefit and amenity of the Riverpark and works or facilities for that purpose; monitoring the state of the development control area and development within and adjoining it; providing assistance to planning authorities on various matters; development approvals within the development control area; providing advice to the Western Australian Planning Commission on policies and planning schemes; issuing permits and licences; entering into collaborative arrangements; issuing river protection notices; and financial and audit accountabilities and reporting.

The CEO of the Department of Parks and Wildlife also has the power and obligation to provide staff and facilities to enable the Swan River Trust to carry out its functions. The Department of Parks and Wildlife is already the employing authority for Swan River Trust staff and provides a range of corporate services to the Swan River Trust. This change will further streamline existing arrangements and will see more than 50 Swan River Trust staff join forces with approximately 1 600 department staff.

Pursuant to Legislative Council standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party, nor does this bill by reason of its subject matter introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

I commend the bill to the house and table the associated explanatory memorandum.

[See paper 1760.]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.