

FREMANTLE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Motion

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [3.53 pm]: I move —

That this house requests the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority to prioritise the coordination and management of the planning and development of the greater Fremantle area, including all of North Fremantle.

Members will know that I have spoken many times before about the important place Fremantle holds in the history of the Swan River colony. From the start, it has been a strategic location as the hub of transport links by sea to the outside world; by river to the port of Perth, to Guildford, to Canning; and by road to the wild country north of the river. Now, times have changed and Fremantle's pre-eminence as a centre of commerce, warehousing and retailing has all gone. Many CBD properties in Fremantle are vacant, standing empty, yet the greater Fremantle area is located on the coast in the middle of the metropolitan area. It abuts both banks of the Swan River. It has history and heritage in its built form and its very environment, but when I ask the question of where it is going and what is being done to realise the value of this place for the next century, what is the answer to that question? Not much is being done; diddly squat; two-thirds of bugger-all. In raising this matter in this place I want to get people thinking about it and to get government doing something about it because the locals will need assistance in a locality that should be of importance to the entire state. For some of the reasons I will outline today and, when we resume, the state government must be involved.

It has always concerned me that so little attention seems to be paid to the medium and long-term planning task in Western Australia. When I became Minister for Transport, for example, I confirmed what I already knew, and that was that there were no plans for the next generation of public transport infrastructure in this rapidly growing state. I asked Mr Stuart Hicks, a pre-eminent Western Australian and former public servant, to gather the best expertise available and advise what the future public transport demand would be and how it could be met over the coming decades. That work was carried out and delivered to government towards the end of 2010. Whether this state and its people are capable of exhibiting the political maturity to embrace long-term planning in this area—I am addressing these remarks to both sides of the political equation—remains to be seen, but that is the sort of planning that I am bemoaning does not exist in Fremantle. It is up to the state to step in and do something about it and accept its responsibility.

Let us go back to Fremantle. The thing members who come from north of the river or the eastern suburbs or who do not know much about Fremantle —

Hon Ken Travers: The best part of it is north of the river.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am joking, of course, but I was seeking to get people involved and listening. I am glad they are listening but more than that I hope they are paying attention because the first thing they need to understand about Fremantle in the context of its future is that the most significant piece of infrastructure that exists there is Fremantle port's inner harbour. It dominates Fremantle and always has but the Fremantle port's functions—petroleum, bulk grain; indeed, bulk cargos of all sorts—have been moving out of that inner harbour for decades now. It has all been relocated to Cockburn Sound and berths in the outer harbour. There are a number of general cargo items such as cars, public vessels and passenger vessels that still have a place in the inner harbour and need the inner harbour and I think probably will for the foreseeable future, and I would like to see that happen. The other main function of the inner harbour, of course, is in relation to containers. Containers will continue to be a feature of inner harbour trade and, therefore, the associated transport link will continue to be a major feature in the immediate area and beyond for a very long time to come.

When I became Minister for Transport some years ago, I was not very pleased to find out that the essential planning that needed to take place for an eventual transition from an inner-harbour, river-mouth container port to an outer-harbour and more remote location had not been progressed. It had been a bit of a stop-start but it had not been progressed as it should have been. For the foreseeable future, North Quay was actually the only option available to us in a reasonable time frame. It is somewhat ironic that I was the Minister for Transport who had to sign off on the options that we have exercised, which was to invest well over \$300 million in deepening the inner harbour, basically rebuilding all of North Quay so that it could take greater container loads and reclaiming a very large piece of seabed with the spoil from the harbour deepening off North Fremantle.

Mark my words; the day will come when the next generation of port infrastructure will have to displace what exists there now. As a state, we need to be planning for that right now; otherwise, we will let down future Western Australians. For example, if we fail to reserve new freight railway corridors and new road transport

corridors to the metropolitan port facilities of the future now, by jeez, wait and see how the next generation or two goes, trying to retrofit that sort of infrastructure on the urban landscape.

Hon Ken Travers: And you were doing it, minister, but it stopped when you lost the portfolio.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: One of the purposes of the points I am raising is that these sorts of things need to be intergenerational. Long-term or even medium-term planning is about making sure that there is continuity as governments come and go and ministers come and go, so that we can plan for the expenditure that is necessary for infrastructure into the future. Then people can invest with confidence. Whether it is 100 years ago or 100 years from now, that inner harbour will continue to dominate the landscape of Fremantle, and that is the first thing we have to address in considering the matters that I have raised in the motion that is before us now.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.