

**PEEL–HARVEY CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT BILL 2014**

*Restoration to Notice Paper — Motion*

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells)** [10.08 am]: I move —

That the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill 2014 be restored to the point it reached prior to its removal from the notice paper on Tuesday, 11 August 2015.

The reinstatement of this bill is particularly timely given that the Environmental Protection Authority has just released a document titled “Perth and Peel @ 3.5 million: Environmental impacts, risks and remedies”. Special mention is made in that report of the plight of the Peel–Harvey estuary and the need for the very body that we are seeking to create through the bill that we are looking to reinstate. The Environmental Protection Authority, in its wisdom, has said that the Peel–Harvey estuary and coastal catchment have long been recognised as having significant water quality issues as a result of nutrient enrichment from land use facilitated by the extensive rural drainage network through the catchment. The primary source of nutrient pollution is rural fertiliser use, although there are contributions from a range of other sources.

The bill that we are putting to the house will tackle the problem of a lack of coordination. We know that the Peel–Harvey estuary has three rivers flowing into it—the Serpentine, Murray and Harvey Rivers. The nutrient loading in those rivers is such that, at the moment, the nutrient levels in the estuary are as high as, if not higher than, the levels prior to the construction of the Dawesville Cut. A significant amount of public money was invested in the Dawesville Cut. At the time, it was put in on the basis that it would solve some of the nutrient problems that lead to all sorts of nutrification problems—algal blooms and what have you. The Dawesville Cut was created so that there would be flushing and, at the same time, we could work with landholders to reduce the nutrient load going into the estuary. Unfortunately, it appears that that has not happened. The EPA identifies one of the reasons for this. It states that there is clearly a lack of coordination in the activities of various agencies involved in different capacities that are trying to reduce that nutrient load coming through. The EPA report states —

The EPA is of the view that there is no clear, contemporary Government policy statement on protection of the Peel–Harvey system. The current policy framework of the EPP and SPP —

That is, the environmental protection policy and the state planning policy —

was developed in the early 1990s, is out of date, and is not considered to have been effective, particularly in guiding future land use in the catchment.

This bill is targeted at guiding future land use in the catchment and assisting those people who have all sorts of ambitions and plans for the catchment area. This bill will enable the creation of a body. We already have wonderful institutions such as the Peel–Harvey Catchment Council and we have various departments that do their very best. The Department of Water takes a coordinating role in the implementation of the water quality improvement plan. The Water Corporation takes a role in the management of many of the rural drains from people’s properties that lead into the river and subsequently into the estuary. However, I question a little bit what the EPA says about the Department of Agriculture and Food. The EPA report states that the Department of Agriculture and Food provides advice on agricultural expansion in the catchment. We have seen such a gutting of the Department of Agriculture and Food that I suspect it no longer has the capacity to provide that advice. I note that the EPA’s report was released in the last days of July 2015. Perhaps in its preparation, the EPA was not aware of the cuts that we saw with the release of the state budget for the current financial year. Those dramatic cuts have meant that the Department of Agriculture and Food just does not have the capacity to advise property owners on alternative fertilisers to use or about the optimum time to fertilise their paddocks to get the best growth without losing a substantial amount of the nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium through rainfall events, which washes through the soils and eventually goes into the estuary via the various drainage networks. I do not believe the Department of Agriculture and Food has that capacity anymore.

The point of the bill that I am seeking to restore to the notice paper is to create a body that can act as the overarching catchment manager. Given the warnings from the EPA, the need for that overarching body is more apparent than ever. Yes, we have made technological fixes, and the Dawesville Cut is a very good example of that. We thought that the Dawesville Cut would provide a flushing process that would reduce the nutrient load. Mind you, it was always anticipated and it was written in the state planning policy from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Just as all that public money was put into the creation of the Dawesville Cut, we should also be investing in programs that will coordinate the activities designed to help landowners change their land use activities so that the amount of nutrient going into the estuary is reduced. That was always the intention, but clearly from what the EPA has outlined in this report, which has been out for only a week or so, we are learning that the problem is as grave as ever.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza):** I just want to clarify that the report you are bringing before Parliament is the reason that the bill needs to be restored. We do not need to go into the debate. Is the report the reason that you are doing it?

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr Acting Speaker. To be honest, I would insist that the bill be restored to the notice paper even without the benefit of the EPA report, but I think the EPA report makes the case stronger than ever that the bill needs to be restored to the notice paper.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** I just wanted to guide you on the fact that we are not to go into the debate on it, but we need to know why the bill needs to be restored.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** With the combination of issues surrounding the Peel–Harvey estuary, including development pressures, the “Draft South Metropolitan Peel Sub-regional Planning Framework: Towards Perth and Peel@3.5million” has been released in recent months. That document highlights the development pressure in the Peel region and the intensification of land use, urban developments and, indeed, the contest that will emerge between the people who want to develop the area for urban purposes and those who want to retain rural aspects and activities. When we see all these reports, the case for the restoration of this bill to the notice paper is overwhelming. The bill goes into a lot of detail about how different agencies can work together. It refers to the establishment of a Peel–Harvey trust, much in the same way as we had previously with the Swan River Trust. We have seen how the change in the situation with the Swan River is playing out, so again we have more information that adds to the case to restore the bill and to have a good and thorough debate about the need for a combined Peel–Harvey Catchment Council and trust so that we have a body that has overarching powers and has a degree of involvement in development approval decision-making. It would be a powerful body. That is what we need to debate. The pressures are such, and the EPA has highlighted that. The case is just overwhelming.

**MR M.J. COWPER (Murray–Wellington) [10.18 am]:** Given that the area the member is describing fits fairly and squarely into the Murray–Wellington electorate, I understand that the reason for moving this motion in the house is that the bill had lapsed for over 12 months. I believe that there is some merit in what is proposed, but I also want to bring to the notice of the house that this legislation was brought to this house when Brian Burke was the Premier of Western Australia. In fact, as a result of that, the Peel Inlet Management Authority was formed. That was, if you like, a framework for looking at ways to use various government departments collectively, in an orchestrated way, to deal with the issues the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill seeks to deal with. I am not objecting to the content of this bill, but I am cautious about its content. I wish the member for Gosnells all the luck given, as any other member in this place can do, he is able to introduce a private member’s bill. I think it is worthwhile for the house to remember that the Peel Inlet Management Authority was provided some statutory powers, but I think it was abolished in 2004 by the very same Labor government. As a result, I subscribe to —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** You are straying a bit, member for Murray–Wellington.

*Point of Order*

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** It seems that the member is attempting to canvass a range of issues to do with the bill rather than its reinstatement on the notice paper—something I believe the government has agreed with.

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** On that point, I am trying to give some weight to the argument of the member who, in good stead, has introduced this bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza):** Member, you need to come back to it.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** I point out that some frameworks were put aside and, as a result, we are now faced with this mishmash of a situation with government departments having dominion over the very area the member for Gosnells has spoken about. I think there is merit in restoring the bill for discussion in some quarters in the future.

Question put and passed.