

**METROPOLITAN REGION SCHEME (BEELIAR WETLANDS) BILL 2021**

*Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Ms R. Saffioti (Minister for Planning)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

*Second Reading*

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Planning)** [12.32 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce legislation that will permanently protect Beeliar Regional Park—the Beeliar wetlands—and forever exclude the area from development. This bill was presented to the Parliament in the last term. It passed the Legislative Assembly in 2019, but, unfortunately, could not be considered in the upper house due to the actions of delay by the Liberal Party.

We have made significant progress to save the Beeliar wetlands for future generations. Last year, we created an A-class conservation reserve of 610 hectares. Today, we are finishing the job to ensure that these highly valued wetlands remain protected for future generations.

The Beeliar wetlands are internationally and nationally significant. The vegetation communities found within Beeliar Regional Park are significant, as they represent communities that have been widely cleared from the Swan coastal plain. A number of areas in Beeliar Regional Park contain priority flora species. The wetlands and surrounding areas provide important nesting and feeding habitats, as well as act as summer refuges for a diverse bird population. Beeliar Regional Park also has high cultural significance for Aboriginal people, particularly North Lake and Bibra Lake, which have spiritual importance.

The bill will rezone 34 hectares in the metropolitan region scheme from a primary regional roads reserve and urban zone to a parks and recreation reservation. A small area is also being zoned urban to reflect existing local roads. The 34 hectares are a key part of the Roe 8 reserve, which is now classified as an A-class reserve.

Land for future road corridors was reserved in the metropolitan region scheme in 1963 when the MRS was created. Since that time, development across the metropolitan area has expanded considerably and we have seen hundreds if not thousands of changes to the MRS. Although there has been and continues to be significant political debate about Roe 8 and the Perth Freight Link, it is our considered view that these reservations are no longer warranted given the environmental values of the wetlands and the government's freight strategy for the future.

In the short term, we are delivering on our commitment to increase the volume of freight on rail. The percentage of freight on rail has increased under the McGowan government to approximately 20 per cent and we will continue to work to increase this percentage even further. We are also working with industry to provide additional train paths for container freight and to facilitate the development of intermodal terminals. The intermodal network plan will provide for new and existing precincts to transfer freight efficiently from road to rail, further improving the competitiveness of rail. The movement of freight efficiently and safely around the state to our ports is a priority of this government. We are a trading state and we need to make sure that we can facilitate strong trade growth into the future.

The Westport Taskforce has recommended a new port in Kwinana and work is actively underway to deliver on this recommendation. So, too, is the work to plan the road and rail connections to this new port. This will not require the Roe 8 and 9 road reservations; instead, work is underway to plan the Thomas Road and Anketell Road east-west corridor.

In recent decades, we have seen the development of the eastern corridor with the Tonkin Highway projects, and new and significant development in transport planning. Tonkin Highway stretches from Muchea to just north of Byford, and works will soon commence to extend it to Mundijong. This significant corridor, together with the development of logistics parks and intermodals in Forrestfield, a new intermodal planned for Kenwick, and future possibilities of intermodals at Mundijong and Bullsbrook, show that this eastern corridor is growing in its importance to meet the freight challenge.

On this I want to refer to the Stephenson plan and some of the comments that have been made in this place about what it does or does not say. First of all, let me say that the Stephenson plan is more than 60 years old, and although it has been the fundamental guiding document for the development of Perth and Fremantle, things have changed dramatically. For example, road corridors like the extension of Tonkin Highway past Armadale and the extension of the freeways were never imagined. However, even the Stephenson plan—more than 60 years old—noted that the inner harbour had a limit and that the outer harbour would need to form a fundamental part of the Fremantle port over time.

Throughout the document, reference is made to the expansion of the Fremantle port to Cockburn Sound. On page 17 it notes —

The port will continue to grow, with increasing emphasis on the Outer Harbour in Cockburn Sound.

On page 136, the plan states —

There exists in the south-eastern part of Cockburn Sound area a vast hinterland capable of accommodating all the uses associated with a major port and industrial area without any of the restrictions on space, becoming more and more apparent, in the vicinity of the Inner Harbour.

It is clear the new port has always been on the agenda and part of the longer term plan. We are ensuring that we have dedicated freight corridors from the east to serve the new port.

Clause 4(1) of the bill will amend the metropolitan region scheme by deleting the primary regional roads reserve that traverses the Beeliar wetlands and a small portion of the urban zone, reserving that land for parks and recreation.

Clause 4(2) of the bill will amend the metropolitan region scheme by deleting a small portion of the primary regional roads reserve—shown in the area shaded reddish brown on the plan—and will zone that portion of land urban. This area will be zoned urban, rather than reserved for parks and recreation, in order to ensure consistency with the zoning of adjacent land. This will ensure that any use and development of land reserved for parks and recreation must preserve the natural environment and provide public recreational opportunities. Rezoning of the land through this bill will ensure that the Beeliar wetlands are preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

The next stage of the process, after the bill has passed, will take place through a standard metropolitan region scheme amendment to engage on rezoning the remaining 84 hectares of land located to the west of North Lake Road that is currently designated as a primary regional road. We will be consulting widely with the community and other stakeholders on the most appropriate future use for this land through a separate planning investigation process.

The retention and protection of the Beeliar wetlands is an issue that we have taken to two elections. We have a clear mandate to deliver on this commitment. This bill will preserve these wetlands for future generations. I believe we need to put an end to the debate about development in this area once and for all. Let us ensure the Beeliar wetlands are protected and reserved for our use and benefit.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle**.