

**CASINO (BURSWOOD ISLAND) AGREEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2011**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 25 May.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson):** Member for Collie–Preston, I know you have a replacement earplug in, but aim it towards the Acting Speaker!

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston)** [10.34 am]: With due respect, everyone knows I have a hearing problem and our Clerk was talking to the ground instead of to me, so I will pass that one off!

**Mr T.G. Stephens:** The question had not been put to the chamber, so you were okay. It was a problem with the Chair!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** That is right! We all know that the Acting Speaker is Mr Heckle and Mr Hyde at the same time!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** It is Mr Jekyll!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** And I am talking about Mr Hyde here!

**Mr F.A. Alban:** He is a serial interjector when he does not have the hat on!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Yes; I think we all know!

Now I have my composure back, I shall move on. I have been waiting and waiting for the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011 to come before the house. My wait started at the regional sitting of Parliament in Bunbury at which I was assured that the issue of two-up for country racing clubs that are inside the 200 kilometre zone would be brought before the house. In fact, a long time ago, the Minister for Racing and Gaming put a spin on the issue of the two-up ban being lifted that made the front page of *The West Australian*. This was after, much to my disappointment, he had conned me. During a debate in Bunbury on a bill on other racing, alcohol and gaming issues, the minister said that if we got the bill through quickly, he should be able to help me out with two-up at the Collie Race Club. But when the application went in, it was rejected. Therefore, I feel a bit aggrieved by the fact that he showed the ball on one hand, but handballed it out of the other. I am looking for a shirt front; I am going to take the minister out and really give him one, because not only did he fool me, but also he fooled *The West Australian* newspaper. The front page of *The West* of Saturday, 30 January 2010, which I have a copy of in front of me, states —

Country horse racing clubs could soon be hosting “two-up” meetings to boost their finances after the State Government confirmed it was in final negotiations with Burswood Casino to reduce a 200km exclusion zone it enjoys on the game.

Sport Minister Terry Waldron said yesterday the Government had been discussing with Burswood for several months about reducing the size of the zone, which is set under WA law.

Lifting the ban would open the way for regional clubs to host two-up events, similar to Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

That was 18 months ago. Although the member for Wagin is the Minister for Sport and Recreation and also the Minister for Racing and Gaming, I do not think he would win a 100-metre race with that sort of pace. As many footballers who dodge the hardball know, they end up getting picked up by someone on the outside of the pack.

**Mr M. McGowan:** He is a frontrunner!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** That is what he is. He might have kicked a goal at my expense way back then, because I went back to the Collie Race Club and said that it was all in the bag, it was right, and then I was left with egg on my face when the minister did not come forward and honour his gentleman’s agreement. That was extremely disappointing. To further the rub, when I was briefed on this bill by the Director of Liquor Licensing, Mr Sargeant, I was again told the same thing: “We should be able to accommodate Collie this year.” I have many faults—my wife does not know many of them at all—but one thing I have is a very good memory. Mr Sargeant gave me exactly the same response, and I just pressed a button and said, “Mr Sargeant, press play. I’ve heard it before.”

It concerns me that the integrity of this bill has been compromised even before we have started to debate it. The minister has a long way to go to convince me that this bill is maybe as good as he thinks it is. If we cannot honour previous agreements, I will have to look under every rock in this bill to ensure that there is nothing in it that is untoward or that will put it over country race clubs and others. I am very concerned about some of the provisions in the bill. I will start with the amendment to the state agreement that will authorise the Burswood

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

Park Board to pay up to \$5 million for the development of the Heirisson Island sculpture park project in such amounts and at such times as determined by the minister. Again, the minister's integrity is in tatters because he did not honour the previous agreement. Why would we allow a bill to go through that provides for something to happen only on the say-so of the minister? I believe that the money should go to the Burswood Park Board to be administered by the board and that the board should make the decisions.

Earlier we talked about the member for Perth but on a different subject. He certainly supports the Burswood Park project. Others also have an interest in the economic and environmental issues around Burswood. Why is this money not being given to the board for it, not the minister, to determine where it should be spent? Sure, the minister will say that the board will make recommendations to him, and that is fine. But recommendations are one thing; doing it is another. We have already seen that in the minister's previous actions. I suggest that maybe there should be some amendments to the bill, unless the minister can convince me otherwise, so that the board can be given the \$5 million unencumbered. In that way, the money could be spent on many environmental issues around the Burswood area.

I will refer to the Burswood Park Board annual report. I believe we are drifting away from the intentions of the board. One of the previous contributions was \$3 million for projects that help protect and improve the quality of the Swan and Canning Rivers. I think that is really important. It is more important—I am glad that the member for Perth is not in the chamber—than statues alone. The way in which the bill is structured means that the money will go towards only statues or Burswood Park. The environmental conditions of the Swan River have been under scrutiny of late, and it always come back to how much money is spent. Here is a freebie in a roundabout way. The minister could get environmental accolades by directing money to the board so that it can replant along the banks of the river, test and look at water quality, and develop an aquifer storage and recovery system. All those things could be done to ensure that the Swan River benefits from this money, rather than just having a statue park on the banks of a stagnant Swan River, which could have algal blooms or anything else. Those sorts of environmental issues could be dealt with independently of a minister's wish. It is very dangerous if a minister can say, "No, you can't spend it on that project because it doesn't suit me." It is an individual thing. I believe the board is best placed to make these decisions. That is one part of the bill that I am concerned about.

The Burswood Park Board annual report states —

Amendments in 2007 to the Agreement scheduled to the *Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Act 1985* provided that the Board can apply monies received under clause 23(1)(c) on projects approved by the Minister responsible for the administration of the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006*.

I think that is where the mistake was made. We need to move past that. The report goes on to state —

... this unprecedented funding supports the implementation of the Healthy Rivers Action Plan. The goal of this plan is to protect the environmental health and community benefit of the Swan and Canning rivers and improve water quality by:

- reducing nutrients and other contaminants;
- minimising sediment loads entering the rivers;
- increasing oxygen levels in the rivers; and
- protecting and rehabilitating the foreshores.

I think that would be a worthy use of this money and, might I say, would be far more worthy than the total \$5 million going to the Burswood Park Board for the development of the Heirisson Island sculpture park. Imagine if someone within the Liberal–National coalition said that we needed a statute of the Premier. That would be the ultimate waste of money. But it could happen under this bill, because the minister would only have to tick off another sculpture down there. Although that may seem ridiculous, it would not be impossible. Many people around the place have tried to get statues of themselves built, and I think the Premier would be one of those people.

I am concerned about where the money will be spent and how it will be spent. That \$5 million would go a long way towards improving the environmental conditions of the Swan River. I am not saying that all the money should go to just one project; I am saying that the board should identify these projects. However, under this bill, the money will go to the Heirisson Island sculpture park. That is one of the major problems I have with the bill. I have taken that from the minister's second reading speech. It is something that we have to look at.

Another concern I have is about the number of extra gaming machines at Burswood Casino. Although a regime is in place for the allocation of a percentage of the turnover of the gaming machines, I would like to see more openness and honesty about the number of extra machines the Burswood gambling complex will be allowed to have under this bill and what it will do in the future. What rules are in place, because it is very limited in how it is set up? This bill will, in the main, change a state agreement. I am sure that the minister will not disagree with

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

that. This is a great time to make some amendments to the bill to provide transparency about what is happening at Burswood Casino. I know that there are other forums in which that can be done, and I understand that. But the people of Perth want to know what is going on.

Every time I go to the casino, which is not that often these days, I run into country people. This \$5 million will be spent on and around Burswood Casino. I am concerned that none of this money will go to country areas. We would like a bit of the spoils as well. Maybe it could be directed to the royalties for regions program, and some might even be spent in the south west. It would be a huge change for some money to come from the royalties for regions program via the Burswood Casino agreement. Country areas are not seeing any of that money. Areas such as Bunbury are choking to death. Today I got a phone call advising me that another 120 jobs have gone from Finesse Foods (Aust) Pty Ltd. There has been no support from the government. We need to look at how money is being spent and whether it is being spent wisely. If the jobs of those people were saved because some money was spent in the area, they would certainly be appreciative, and the minister might get more accolades than he has ever had from that area. Maybe he could go a little further and spend some money on the Bunbury racecourse. It is asking for \$8 million for an improvement. But, no, the racecourse is in the south west, so we cannot have that! They can have it in Northam or they can have it out at the flat track in Merredin, but we cannot have a project that will really enhance tourism and employment in the south west. That could happen by using some of this money that is derived, in a way, from gambling. I am concerned that not one cent of this money will be spent in country areas. We could have had new two-up rings installed at country racetracks paid for out of this money, but that will not happen. The area where the money will be spent is very, very limited. Having said that, I agree that it is time that the ban on playing two-up is lifted; many of the people playing two-up after a race meeting will play only once or twice a year, so it is not as though it is the biggest deal ever. One of the biggest two-up games outside Kalgoorlie is held in Mumballup, near the great big red gum tree. I attended one of the best two-up games ever on the day of the Collie–Donnybrook pushbike race, which has been going for 84 years. I could always tell how the economy was going by whether people were betting with \$20, \$50 or \$100! Hundreds of people from all over the south west were there.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** How many heads did you throw?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I have a special story about that! Yes, I had four heads, and I was coming up for the fifth head and I was going to clean the school out of five, and members would not believe it—up went the pennies and everyone was looking up, and down they came, and the penny went across the thing and hit a honky nut. It was going to be a head but it hit a honky nut and fell on the other side and I lost my money. That was just so disastrous for me!

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson):** Member for Collie–Preston, I am sure you are going to get back to the bill.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I am! This is all about gambling, and I was ripped off by a honky nut! Not only that, I remember very clearly getting home at about 2.00 am and getting another belting!

Those sorts of events have been taken away from country life because the two-up ring was on the 194-kilometre mark. It was ridiculous to have a bill that made it illegal to play two-up because the ring was four or five kilometres inside the line; it took away a tradition that had been in place for many, many years. Around 3 000 people used to work in the timber industry in the Mumballup area, so members can imagine that some of those games went for more than a day. I certainly welcome the changes around playing two-up.

I wish to know how the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011 will affect special events within the 100-kilometre range. I am not quite sure who will make the decisions and whether there will be any right of appeal. For example, if somebody gets knocked back when they request to have a two-up game after a “special event”, such as the Perth Cup or a good night in Northbridge—I am not sure what would be classed as a special event—will they be able to appeal? I think whom the decision will be made by and whether there will be a right of appeal are not clearly enough defined. It is very, very important in any process of law that if someone has been knocked back, they are given the right of appeal or are given an explanation for having been knocked back. The problem with many bills that go through this house, not just those related to gaming, is that there is no requirement that people have to be told why they have been knocked back. My questions are: what are special events; how do they work; who is going to make the decision; and will there be a right of appeal? That is all I have to say on the two-up side of things.

The cruise ships have been a gimme. People get on ships in Fremantle and go to Bali, but they cannot gamble on the ships until they are outside Western Australian waters. Some of those cruise ships go only as far as Geraldton so they are unable to open their casinos or gambling facilities and they are very worried about that. I understand the minister’s concerns about weekend gambling trips, whereby people can be outside Fremantle by just 12 kilometres and be on a straight gambling ship. I understand that it would be far better to have that business

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

onshore rather than the boats going out past Rottnest Island and people partying for the weekend and gambling. I can understand the minister's concern, and I think that in that sense he has been very fair in saying that the cruises must leave the port and stop at another destination along the way before they can return. I think that is sensible, and it will certainly look after Western Australian jobs.

I turn now to an issue related to turnover. Some of the amending provisions in the bill relate to the minimum yearly base payment having been reduced to \$83 000. What would happen if there was a downturn in the industry and less profit was made?

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Do you mean to the board?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Yes. The bill states —

... equal to the greater of:

- (i) \$83,334; or
- (ii) the aggregate of:
  - (A) one per centum (1%) of Casino Taxable Revenue for Table Games for the month;

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Do you mean the Burswood levy?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Yes. I believe the Burswood levy has been removed; will there be a minimum levy that will have to be paid?

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** The Burswood levy hasn't been removed from the bill. The levy is still there.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** On my reading of it, the base levy was to be taken out, and that was my concern. If that is covered, I am quite happy with that. If there is no base levy and profits are reduced, that means that companies will be able to fly under the radar by not paying the one per cent aggregate.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** No, the levy is part of the new agreement; it continues. I will clarify what you are saying in my reply.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I am just trying to safeguard the government and the department by inquiring about what will happen if companies do not pay, or what is in place to stop them getting out of paying. I am not saying they intend to do that, but I think there should be safeguards in the bill so that that cannot happen.

I raise again the issue of how many extra pokie machines there will be and how the number will be controlled. I cannot see any provision in the bill related to that, although I am sure it is covered. There has been a recent increase of 200 in gaming machines on the floor of Burswood Casino.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** It was 250.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Does the government have control of how many machines there will be, where they will be situated, and where the returns from those extra machines will go?

My final matter is that I have been promised twice that we might be able to get two-up going in Collie; I think the last time was in October. I would like a verbal commitment from the minister in *Hansard* that he will allow two-up.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** As long as you pass the bill it will be there, Mick!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Okay, but I have been caught like that before! It is a look-away handball, and I am not going to fall for it again!

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** That is an inducement to vote for the bill, which is a criminal offence. I would not do that if I were you, minister!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I know it will take an age for the bill to go through the upper house, and we do not know whether it will come back with amendments, but I would certainly like to have some assurance from the minister that we will be able to play two-up at Collie races this year. Racegoers get ready, they get all excited, and then the minister brings down the hammer and says no. In all seriousness, I think country towns deserve the chance to have gambling on their one or two race days a year, because I have concerns that, after some of these meetings, people get a bit wound up and say, "Okay, we're going to jump in the car now and we will travel to Perth to go to Burswood. It is 200-odd kilometres. Yes, we've got a driver." A few of them would have had a few drinks. They get here, they go to the casino until three or four in the morning and say, 'Let's go home,' and that is when the accidents happen. I am looking at it from a safety point of view. How do I know about it? I have been in one of those cars. That is a lesson of life. I think that if they were able to carry on gambling for just a little longer, until eight o'clock or nine o'clock, while the lights are on, it would stop the energies of young blokes to slip

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

down to Perth for a gamble. I am very keen to make sure that gambling happens locally so that people do not get carried away and have road accidents on the way to Perth. Especially with the Forrest Highway now, people think that it is not far to Perth and they can slip down to Perth and have a bit of a bet at the casino. It is the bright lights and things that country kids like to see. I would like us to have two-up in Collie this year. It was promised 18 months ago and it still has not been done. When we hear the director general saying the same thing again, it rankles a little to think that we have had one put over us.

The other thing that concerns me about this is probably a bit far-fetched, but it is worth a float. I see the member for South Perth is here as well as the member for Wagin, the minister. I am wondering whether any trades have been done with a nod and a wink—they do not have to answer—with the stadium being put at Burswood. While this is only a small-time issue, if the stadium goes to Burswood, we will have a bigger environmental problem with more people and more run-off et cetera. Although the minister might say that we do not know about the stadium at this stage, we need to consider with this legislation what the future is for that area with the environment—the statistics and issues—instead of just the Heirisson Island statue precinct.

I am concerned that this legislation is a government agreement act and the fact that further changes would certainly be delayed, as we would need to go back and see whether there is agreement on this issue. Changes cannot be made to the bill without talking to the parties to the agreement, and that would slow everything down. I think it is very important to get some understanding from the minister and, when we go to consideration in detail, get some commitment on each of the parts of the agreement. There are some areas that I am quite happy with; others I am doubtful about.

In closing, I ask the minister to put a caveat on the money when it goes through so that we will not need to have a statue of the Premier in the park. There are many other statues of dignitaries around the place, but I do not think people would want to see one with a snarl on its face. I am sure there are a few other members who would like to comment on this bill. I am really concerned about where the money goes, how it is distributed, whether it is fairly distributed, and whether country people get a bit of it, because they contribute a lot to the casino, and I think they should be considered along the way.

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham)** [11.04 am]: The opposition will support this Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011. It is designed to increase the overall tax take from Burswood Casino following an agreement between the government and the casino. I think these agreements roll around every few years, and they are renewed. There is a negotiation essentially between the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor and the management of the casino and as a consequence a tax rate is struck, and there is a return to government from the operations of the casino. What often happens is the casino wants to change its operations or, more than likely, expand its operations. As a consequence, it provides some leverage for the government in terms of the tax take at the casino.

According to the second reading speech, this is the twelfth supplementary agreement. Therefore, since the casino was established in the mid-1980s there have been 12 agreements to define what is the tax take by the state and what it will be used for. Without wishing to go too much into the past, the last agreement that I am familiar with was in August 2006, whereby the casino came to the then government, in which I was simultaneously the Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Environment, and said, “Look, we would like to expand our operations. We would like to put in place more gaming machines. We would like to change the internal arrangements of the casino—that is, the footprint inside the casino. On top of that, we would like to expand the high rollers’ room.” There was a set of discussions within government and a set of discussions with the casino. What was eventually resolved was that the casino was able to expand the number of gaming machines—not poker machines—and it would also be able to move the high rollers’ room, and hence the Pearl Room was created, which is a much better and far more attractive facility for overseas gamblers who come to Perth to gamble.

The quid pro quo for government out of that agreement in 2006 was an increase in the tax take. I was Minister for the Environment and Minister for Racing and Gaming at the time. Some of the tax take—the levy, I think it is called—goes directly to the maintenance of Burswood Park, which once upon a time, before I lived in Western Australia, was part of a tip site—a derelict area abutting the river. Over time it has been converted into a lovely park that abuts the river, and people recreate there; it is a nice area. Part of the problem with Burswood Park is that it had so much money spent on it that people were at a bit of a loss to think what else the money could be spent on at Burswood Park, because it had gone from a piece of land in poor condition to an attractive piece of land. We worked out that Burswood Park did not really need any more money spent on it, unless it was spent on gold-plating the swings and putting in place diamond-encrusted fishing platforms or the like, and we would have to look at spending the money elsewhere. We decided to hypothecate, or allocate, some of the increase in the tax revenue directly to the Swan River. The Swan River has huge pressures on it. After 180 years or so of European

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

settlement, its health is nowhere near as good as it could be. It is an environmental icon of the state, and it is a river that deserved some money spent on it.

We did two things. First, I announced the phase-in of the fertiliser ban, which was designed to stop those high-nitrogenous fertilisers dropping phosphorus and nitrogen content into the river, which is the principal cause of the damage to the health of the river. Unfortunately, that fertiliser ban has been wound back by the Barnett government and will no longer exist. The fertiliser ban was abandoned and therefore the health of the rivers and wetlands in the south west of Western Australia will be adversely affected by that wind-back of the fertiliser ban.

The second thing the former Labor government did was spend money on environmental initiatives on the river. The river has huge demands. We spent money on creating the Swan Canning Riverpark by legislation passed in 2006, which provided easier management of the river and easier ways of providing support for the river. I think we also created a category called river guardians or some such category, which was a role for people to voluntarily work on the river. That support was designed with plantings and interventions in nutrient flows so that modern technology could be put in place to take nutrients out of some of the inlets that flow into the river. We put in more oxygenation machines and those sorts of things to improve the river, using funding that had been obtained from the Burswood Entertainment Complex expansion. I thought that was quite clever, but then again it was my idea!

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Ha, ha!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I thought it was quite clever!

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** Has it worked?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will get to that. I thank the member for South Perth.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** I think the jury is out!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member for South Perth is always full of good information.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** I know something about the river because my electorate is on the river. I don't think yours is. Yours is on the ocean.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will stop saying nice things about the member for South Perth if he keeps responding like that to me!

In any event, the idea was for an increase of at least \$3 million on top of the existing budget for the Swan River Trust each year to be put into those environmental initiatives. Three million dollars does not sound like much but—my goodness!—in a small agency such as the Swan River Trust that has enormous demands placed on it, it was a lot of money for the trust to spend on the river. The idea was, therefore, to add that money to the Swan River Trust budget to provide an increasing flow of revenue for all those initiatives so that it could work to improve the health of the river. Dozens of initiatives were to be put in place to remove nutrients. All sorts of community groups of volunteers have initiatives and do plantings to remove nutrients and so forth. The right sorts of native plants planted alongside the river take nutrients out of the inflows into the river. All sorts of technology could have been put in place. The idea was to provide a growing funding source to the Swan River Trust so that it actually could do something about the river. The Burswood people were happy with that because the river was important to their business, because it sits on the river. The health, appeal and attractiveness of the river are important to their business. The river is what people see from their hotel rooms; it is right there in front of them. Even young James Packer was a bit of an environmentalist in some ways and he no doubt would have been happy with the idea that his business was doing something for Western Australia's environment. The Burswood Entertainment Complex was a very good acquisition for James Packer and it has been very successful under his management. I think we allowed his acquisition of the business back in 2002–03 and it has gone ahead in leaps and bounds since then because he had experience and capital behind him and was able to improve the business. He worked out that the location of the business vis-a-vis our northern neighbours meant that it was ideally placed to build upon what was until then a business that was not capitalising on our northern neighbours. Because of his involvement in his other businesses in some countries to our north, he was able to provide those linkages and so forth to expand the business. That is a good thing. I therefore believe he was happy with the idea that some money from the increase in gaming revenue would go directly towards supporting the river in front of his business. It was a good thing from his point of view as well.

What has happened? I have a copy of the budget for this year that was handed down recently. It indicates on page 846 under division 71 the total amount spent on the Swan River Trust. Expenditure on the Swan River Trust has declined in the past couple of years, and it flattens out over coming years. Although the initiative put in place in 2006–07 resulted in a significant increase in the Swan River Trust budget of roughly \$3 million a year, and over the last few years probably \$10 million to \$12 million in additional funds, the budget has now flattened

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

out and, in real terms, is in decline. The 2009–10 actual figure is \$13.3 million and this year’s budget is \$11.2 million; that is a decline of \$2 million in the last two years. In the following four years it might go up by less than \$1 million, but in real terms that is probably a decline.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** Does that include the money from Burswood?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I think so. The member for South Perth, as someone who represents a suburb right alongside the river, probably should look at this budget for the Swan River Trust.

My concern is that the budget for the Swan River Trust is now flat and in decline, which was not the idea behind the levy when it was put in place and allocated to the river. There are numerous measures upon which this money could have been spent to improve the health of the river. When people around Western Australia, certainly around Perth, were asked what the key environmental issues were, the second one after the issue of the old-growth forest was resolved was the health of the river that runs through our capital city. The idea was to fix its health in the long term by dealing with the fertiliser issue and to take initiatives in the short term to improve it by providing additional money to the Swan River Trust. Both those initiatives have now gone by the wayside. To me that is very disappointing.

I would have thought that changing the agreement to allow for up to \$5 million to be spent on statues on Heirisson Island —

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** It’s actually not on statues. Just be careful. I’ll talk to you about that. Your authorisation for the Swan River remains, so it’s still there. We haven’t changed it, so that’s still happening.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There are two points on that. One is that I think the decision we made in 2006 to hypothecate that money to improve the Swan River probably has remained; that is a good thing.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Yes.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** But there has been a withdrawal of the base budget of the Swan River Trust.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Not through me.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Otherwise, there would be a continuing expansion in the Swan River Trust’s budget, because the success of the casino continues to grow and, as I said, the agreement was designed to provide growth revenues for the river.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Certainly.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Why is it declining? I can pull out the budget and show the minister that it is declining. What the minister says does not make sense in light of the fact that the Swan River Trust budget is declining. The minister’s second reading speech on the third page states that the bill —

... will authorise Burswood Park Board to pay up to \$5 million for the development of the Heirisson Island sculpture park project ...

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Yes.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The minister will determine how and when that will be spent. My view is that the health of the river is more important than the Heirisson Island sculpture park project. If I were the minister, I would be looking at putting additional funds towards the health of the river. The idea behind the funding at the time we put it in place was to integrate Burswood into some of the announcements for improvements to the river and to give Burswood a bit of ownership—credit might be too strong a word—over what might be done. I do not know whether that has happened. It was regarded as a good thing, whenever an announcement about providing funding for the Swan River Trust was to be made, to incorporate a role for business into such an announcement. Perhaps that has not taken place, but it was certainly my intention back in 2006; it would have ensured that in the future we might have had greater interest from Burswood in putting more resources towards the health of the river. That is not only in Burswood’s interest, but in everyone’s interest. Perhaps that is part of the problem, but in my view \$5 million for a Heirisson Island sculpture park is not in any way as worthwhile an expenditure as what was spent on the Swan River Trust back in 2006.

Although this bill cannot be amended because it is an agreement between the government and Burswood, I suggest that the government has missed an opportunity and could have come up with a better arrangement. If the government’s priority is the Heirisson Island sculpture park, that is its priority; my priority was, and is, the health of the Swan River. That is obviously not receiving the same attention now.

**Mr T.K. Waldron** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The racing industry is every racing and gaming minister’s priority!

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

**Mr T.K. Waldron** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There will be sculptures of horses out there! There will be a sculpture of Takeover Target, the former great racehorse—not the member for South Perth!

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** He was a gelding!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Perhaps we could have the member for South Perth riding him in the sculpture! Is Heirisson Island in the member for South Perth's electorate or the member for Perth's electorate?

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** I think it might be in the member for Perth's electorate.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** To return to the Swan River Trust budget, perhaps the minister will be able to explain why total appropriations, on page 846, appear to be declining in real terms. I suggest that the minister should go back to the original intent. Although that is impossible now, it is a fair criticism to make that he has moved away from that, but that is his choice.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** We haven't moved away from it at all; we've embraced what you've done.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Yes, but the government has moved away from fertiliser restrictions, we have a declining budget for the Swan River Trust, and excess revenue is now going towards a sculpture park on Heirisson Island. Those are three significant points.

**Mr M.P. Murray** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** In any event, I am pleased, member for Collie–Preston; that is good. That sort of work is necessary when we go through these processes. Whilst the opposition will support the legislation, we think the government could have done a better job than it has.

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells)** [11.22 am]: I rise to speak to the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011. I begin by saying that I do not think we have anywhere near enough funding going towards the health of the Swan River. The repair bill we face is an enormous one; the \$3 million a year provided by the casino towards restoration of the river is indeed welcome, but it is not enough, and neither is the amount coming from consolidated revenue to the Swan River Trust. We need to look at how the funds are applied and what other measures are open to us. It is often the case that spending money on a problem is just part of the solution. The member for Rockingham mentioned other means at our disposal for solving the excessive nutrient problem that is causing so much of the ecological dysfunction that we see in the Swan River. The nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the Swan River are causing us problems such as algal blooms, and there are reduced oxygen levels in the river. These are all the sorts of factors that lead to a decline in the ecological health of the river, which then impacts on our human uses of the river.

I recall that in January–February 2000, we had a downpour in part of the Swan–Avon catchment that led to the Swan River being closed for two weeks. There was a green algal bloom in the river that could be seen everywhere and it was very toxic, so we had to close the river for two whole weeks. That sort of event could happen more often if we do not apply ourselves to this serious problem. It was interesting to note that when that event occurred, the source of the nutrient—principally nitrogen—was well down in the catchment. Indeed, the Swan–Avon catchment extends down as far as Lake Grace, many, many kilometres away, and that was where the downpour occurred that flushed the nutrient through the Avon River and into the part of the Swan River that adjoins the CBD of Perth. That illustrates how something that happens in a distant part of the catchment can have an impact on other parts of the river. It is important that we look at this issue in a whole-catchment scale way. Commendable as the river park initiative is, I am concerned that it may restrict our focus on the immediate area of the Swan and Canning Rivers and will not enable us to carry out the sorts of controls and restorative approaches that we need further out in the catchment. In other words: why can we not attack the problem of excess nitrogen coming into the Swan via the Avon, from areas as far away as Lake Grace? We have to be able to do that to solve this problem.

I also note that the river park does not include private property. That means that we have to have other mechanisms for attacking the excess nutrient flow into the river, working with private landholders. The Barnett government's decision to not implement a ban on water soluble fertilisers is a great mistake, because that was probably the most effective mechanism we had at our disposal to stem the flow of cheap fertilisers that quickly dissolve in water and end up in the river system, causing the sorts of problems I am speaking of. There really is a need to look at other aspects of this problem. We need to make sure that the \$3 million a year coming into the program through gambling revenue is properly applied, but we need to use other mechanisms at our disposal as well. Reducing nutrients is critical to the health of the river, as is minimising sediment loads. We need to make



Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

sure that landholders are managing their properties in such a way that we do not have excessive erosion of soil and the runoff that comes from that. We also need to make sure that oxygen levels are at the levels required by the many fish species and other organisms that inhabit the river.

Protecting and rehabilitating the foreshore is, of course, a major part of river health, and I think that is where much of the funding has been applied to date. However, \$3 million a year plus the money that the Swan River Trust has at its disposal—some \$10 million to \$12 million—is not enough for the scale of work that is required. I constantly hear from the local governments in my area, the City of Gosnells and the City of Canning, that they are struggling to keep up with the amount of work that needs to be done on the portions of the river that those local government areas occupy.

I commend my colleague the member for Southern River for organising an activity on the banks of the Southern River this weekend—basically a rubbish collection exercise. He has had to call on volunteer effort in our community to clean up rubbish that has been dumped in the upper reaches of the Canning River and in the Southern River. I do not think that people should have to do that work while volunteering, although it is great that people are prepared to do it. We should have laws in place that persuade people from dumping in the river anyway but we should not just be reliant on the goodwill volunteer effort of people to clean up such important community assets. That is the sort of work that local government should be adequately funded to do. If we had greater streams of money coming in to manage the river, that would make a big difference.

I have spoken a little about the \$3 million that has been provided and whether that amount is adequate. I note that a total of \$9 million has been provided for a range of activities in the Swan and Canning river system up to 30 June 2010. That is a significant injection of funds.

I am concerned that we are reliant on the funding that comes from gambling. I worry about gambling. Obviously this relates directly to the bill and the proposal to expand the number of gaming machines at Burswood Casino. I think an additional 250 machines will be allowed at the casino. There is also the possibility of gaming machines being put on boats going out into state waters and people being allowed to gamble on them.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** That's not right. I will clarify that for you later.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** I look forward to the minister's clarification. I understand that these boats will be going out. I am quickly glancing at the second reading speech. It states that the legislation will permit gaming on cruise ships whilst in WA waters. Anything that further entrenches gambling in Western Australia society is unhealthy.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** I know what you are getting at and I would agree with you if that were the case, but they have to be transiting ports interstate or overseas. They can't just go out and gamble.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** That is a good point. I am pleased to hear that these people will be in transit. I am concerned that that could be circumvented by people, and companies may seek to make trips to Bali. The primary reason for people taking those cruises will be to indulge their habit of using gaming machines. That is unfortunate. We should oppose anything that facilitates gambling in our society. It should not be something that we are facilitating.

There are so many other healthier activities than gambling. I realise that there is a social dimension to gambling but many other activities do not require people to put money on the line and risk losing that money. These other activities can help them meet other people and amuse themselves without indulging in gambling. I have concerns about that aspect of the legislation. Proof of the continual embracement of gambling in our society can be seen when we watch various sports on television these days. The enticement towards gambling activities is on the rise. The trivial things that people are allowed to bet on these days is appalling. Sports commentators have morphed into being the spruikers of the gambling houses. That is a very sad development. They are merely mouthpieces for gambling companies to make more and more money. People are allowed to bet on all sorts of absurd things these days. While watching what was once a fairly wholesome activity of a football match on TV, they are asked to bet on who scores the first goal in the game. We are seeing that sort of stupidity. That is a real debasement of standards in our society and it is something that I am totally opposed to. I express the concern that anything that further entrenches gambling in our society should be discouraged.

I get back to the idea that we need a stream of funding that goes towards the very useful purpose of improving the health of the Swan and Canning river system. That funding needs to be properly applied. There will be competing goals for that money. One idea is that some of it could go towards statues on Heirisson Island. Primarily, the money was approved to be spent on improving the ecological health of the river system. That is where the money is most needed. Given the legitimate concern that people have about the ecological welfare of the Swan and Canning river system, it is a good use of the money, albeit I have concerns about how that money is raised. We must take action on the future of the Swan River. That is something that I support.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

I also understand that there are other dimensions to this legislation, including the increases in taxes that will be waged on gaming machines. I wonder whether that is enough. Burswood Casino is obviously a very profitable operation. It is paying a new casino tax rate of 22 per cent. Is that really enough for us to mop up the problems that come from this activity plus pay for the other benefits such as cleaning up the river? There are many questions to be asked about this legislation. I look forward to hearing the minister's further clarification of various aspects of it. I hope that the Swan and Canning river system receives more funding in the future, not less. I also hope that the Barnett government is not tempted to become solely reliant on gambling revenue to pay for the health of the river and that other funding from the state government will go towards ensuring that the Swan and Canning river system is properly looked after.

**MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth)** [11.37 am]: I support the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2010. I am experiencing a bit of *deja vu* today because when the previous Burswood arrangement was introduced in 2006, the member for Rockingham was the Minister for Racing and Gaming and I was on the other side of the chamber. We raised similar points about the fact that the government was not spending enough money on the Swan River. As the member for South Perth, whose electorate is bordered on three sides by the Swan and Canning river system, it has always been close to my heart. I made certain comments about it at the time. I have always had the view that governments of both persuasions have never really invested enough into the Swan River, which is a great icon of our great state. I do not know why that is the case. I think it has something to do with the fact that it is not real sexy to put money into the Swan River. There is no ribbon to cut. For that reason, governments are inclined to pay lip-service to it. The member for Rockingham referred to the reduction in funding to the Swan River Trust, which I will be looking at closely and asking a few questions about.

I will get back to what happened in 2006. I recall making the point that I believed it was a good initiative for the tax from the extra gaming machines at Burswood to be put into a project such as the Swan River. I also felt that it should be badged because there is a bit of criticism from people in this house and also some organisations in Western Australia about gambling. It is a legal product. Burswood is an outstanding facility. It is a safe place for people to go, particularly women. It has good security and good parking. It is a place where we can have destination gambling, because governments of both persuasions have always said that we will never have poker machines introduced in Western Australia.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Are you in favour of pokies?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No, I do not support poker machines.

I felt that this was an opportunity for Burswood to be credited with the funding of some of these initiatives. I felt that we should make sure that those programs are well advertised. If the Heirisson Island project goes ahead, people should know that it has been funded by Burswood Casino, however it ends up. For instance, the Hong Kong Jockey Club might fund a new wing of a hospital in Hong Kong and that wing will be badged as being funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. It is important that people realise that some of these big gaming and wagering operations contribute to society in many ways, as well as by putting money back into state Treasury. I support the \$5 million going to the development of the Heirisson Island sculpture park.

I am not sure whether the point has been made today that the previous government decided to support the takeover of Burswood by the Packer family. That has been a great success story, because I believe the Packer family has spent up to \$400 million since taking over the facility.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** They plan to spend a fair bit more, too.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I do not think that would have happened under the previous arrangement. It has given us the opportunity to create this tourism destination. I made the point in another speech that I believed that Burswood had had more visits than any other site in Western Australia. That was challenged, but I still think that is the case.

The other aspect I want to talk about is the money going to the racing industry. I applaud the minister for that. I believe that \$5 million will go up-front to the racing industry from the extra tax revenue, plus \$2 million a year for the next four years. The racing industry is really at the crossroads at the moment. A few years ago, when the previous boom was happening and TAB turnover was rising at an extraordinary rate, there were all sorts of predictions about what was going to happen in racing. The member for Rockingham was the minister at the time. I remember making a statement as the shadow spokesperson that to help the Ascot carnival, which was suffering a bit, we should underwrite air travel to bring horses over. The minister put out a shocking press release bagging my statement and saying what a terrible thing it would be to help people to bring horses to Perth to take our Western Australian prize money back to the eastern states.

**Mr M. McGowan:** I had forgotten!

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** That now happens, member for Rockingham; Racing and Wagering WA underwrites a plane! They have to pay for it, but RWWA underwrites it. I am just rewriting a bit of history for the member for Rockingham, because he wrote a bit of history in his press release. I am just keeping him up to the mark. He is very challenging.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Yet more evidence that you should be elevated to the cabinet!

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No. A lot happened back in those times. The member for Rockingham will recall that there was talk that prize money in Perth racing would go to \$70 000 for Saturday races. I think back then the stake money for Wednesday races was \$25 000. We were going to have a booming racing industry. We were told that trainers from the east coast would be lured to Perth and would set up stables here because we would have great prize money. We were told that Victorian racing would suffer because it was going to lose the gaming rights, which the state government was taking off it. What we have seen, in fact, is that, on Saturdays, stake money is a minimum of \$70 000 in Melbourne, a minimum of \$70 000 in Brisbane, and a minimum of \$70 000 or \$80 000 in Sydney. What has happened in Perth? Perth racing has now dropped to \$45 000. We are the state that drives the economy in all sorts of ways, along with Queensland. What has happened in our racing industry? Rather than the prize money offered in our racing industry going up, it is now \$5 000 less a race than it was a couple of years ago. The racing industry is a huge employer of labour. I do not know whether we will get to \$70 000. I would like to see it happen. At the moment, for that reason, we have to come to the conclusion that racing is facing a few problems.

Members have to remember that the racing industry is fairly self-reliant; it does not rely on handouts from the government. In fact, it generates a huge amount of revenue—about \$60 million a year—for Treasury. This industry is creating a lot of money for Treasury but at the same time is suffering problems. It often has to go cap in hand to government to get support for things like infrastructure. That leads me to the point that last year, the minister formed a committee to look at the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act. I was chair of that committee. When we spoke to stakeholders throughout the industry, we found that one of the biggest challenges they believed the industry faces is in providing funding for both new infrastructure and fixing existing infrastructure.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Do you believe that they should go through royalties for regions to get money for that infrastructure?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Yes, I think there should be some. I will get to that. I am a great believer in royalties for regions. I might even move to the regions to live. Merredin or somewhere like that would be a good place to live.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** It would be nice to have a big grandstand in Merredin.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Going back to the days when the member for Rockingham was the Minister for Racing and Gaming, TAB turnover was going up at an extraordinary rate. TAB turnover has now flattened out. Some other factors affecting that have been the global financial crisis and the equine influenza virus in the eastern states, which affected the number of race meetings on the east coast.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Money should be coming out of the mining boom and going into racing.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No, I am talking about racing now. There were factors that affected turnover. Currently, the industry does not have the funding coming back through the TAB that it had budgeted for. My wife races a couple of horses, so I am really probably speaking on her behalf.

**Ms L.L. Baker:** We need to support the horseshoe levy that the Australian Horse Industry Council tried to get up and running a few years back but for which it couldn't get support.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** That is a side issue. This issue is more fundamental to the funding of the industry to get prize money. If we do not have prize money, we might as well go back to the days when people raced their horses for a side wager. We could go back to the old days in England when a person would bet a block of his estate on a race between two towns.

**Mr M. McGowan:** So your “wife” has a couple of racehorses?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** She does, actually. I hope she does very well with them.

I applaud what the minister is doing. Out of this extra funding from Burswood, \$13 million will go into funding infrastructure for the racing industry. The problem as I see it is that \$13 million is the tip of the iceberg in terms of the needs of the industry; its needs are massive.

The greyhound industry needs a new facility at Cannington, which I am told will cost along the lines of \$20 million or \$30 million. Bunbury Turf Club has plans for a \$15 million redevelopment. Bunbury is a major

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

rural centre; it is the second biggest city in the state. It has an outstanding racing facility, but it is old and needs a lot of work done on it. The club wants to put in a new synthetic track, it needs a new stalls area and the grandstand needs be fixed. A lot of money needs to be spent on that facility.

Our committee's recommendation was that the government reduce the tax on wagering by an amount sufficient to provide a racecourse infrastructure fund—similar to where this \$13 million is going now—that would not have to rely on the government of the day putting money into infrastructure, but that would be generated by any increase in TAB revenue over the years. As TAB turnover increased, that fund would be expected to increase. There are huge needs, even at Ascot or Belmont Park racecourses, where there are big grandstands, and a lot of money has to be spent on such infrastructure. There are racecourses and grandstands all around Western Australia, and we need to consider things like safety and running rails et cetera. Some racecourses in the north of the state do not have perimeter fences. Someone was badly injured when a horse bolted and hit a tree outside a racecourse. I understand that Treasury is not keen on reducing the tax applied to wagering. I am not sure whether the minister has done much lobbying, but I know that the industry expects the Minister for Racing and Gaming to support it in his role in that portfolio; I am sure he will do that. I ask the minister to keep that idea in front of him. It was a key plank of our committee's report. This industry could be more self-sufficient if it were allowed to retain more of the money it generates. The money generated by the TAB and by the racing industry —

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Do you think that Perth Racing has been aggressive enough in its marketing in the way it does things?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I think that Perth Racing made a fundamental error when it refused to talk to the government about the possibility of selling Belmont Park. It was a terrible error. Perth Racing has a property worth between \$300 million and \$400 million; it races six months of the year. The grandstand is in terrible condition, and an average crowd of 2 000 people is attracted to a meeting. How can that be justified? It is like sitting on a \$10 million property on the foreshore in Dalkeith or Nedlands and having no money in the bank. Perth Racing also has quite a significant debt. An error was made there. Perth Racing is now determined to continue with its plan to develop Belmont Park. If it happens, I will be happy to see it, but it could be a long-term project. The opportunity to talk to the government about another site, which would have been a winter racecourse somewhere down the southern freeway, could have given Perth Racing the funding it needs to spend a lot of money at Ascot, which is, of course, where the major carnival races are run. There could have been a significant rebuild of Ascot: the track could have been reshaped and the horse stalls could have been moved. I have always believed that there should be a 2 000-metre chute at Ascot; it could have done that. Ascot has been there for a long time and every now and again places need some regeneration. That is an error that Perth Racing made.

It would be good if the industry could get some reduction in the tax on wagering. I would like to know how much money the government gets a year out of Burswood Casino in comparison with taxes raised from the racing industry.

**Mr P.B. Watson:** I would like to know how much it gets out of the member for South Perth!

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I am an enthusiast of racing. Horseracing is a very legal product and something I have always been passionate about.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Have you picked up any mid-week first prizes yet?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No, my wife's horses have not picked up —

**Mr M. McGowan:** Your wife's?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** My wife's horses actually picked up a very small amount of some prize money last week.

A lot of people rely on the racing industry going right back to the primary producers, transport drivers, the strappers, the veterinarians —

**Mr M.P. Murray:** There are around 3 000 people.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The racing industry is a significant employer, and it is a kindred industry to the gaming industry that operates at Burswood. I congratulate the minister for making that part of this new funding from the extra taxing of the new machines at Burswood. The industry will welcome it, and it is an incremental step towards probably even greater demands that the industry will be looking at.

Another big factor impacting on the racing industry in Western Australia that I have not mentioned is the enormous pressure that the TAB is now under from other wagering operators. I do not think we will ever stop those people from operating. Measures have been taken to ensure that these people contribute, and I think that

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

that is happening now. Some court proceedings are taking place on the east coast in that regard. However, those operators must contribute to the racing industry and must contribute if they bet on the product, and I think that that is happening. This issue impacts on the turnover of the TAB, and I am sure the minister is well aware of that matter.

I support the minister. I think that this is good legislation and a step in the right direction.

**MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands)** [11.56 am]: I would like to come out of the gates in support of the member for South Perth in the opening of my speech! I understand that this is the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011; nevertheless, quite a bit of discussion took place about its racing and gaming aspects. Before I talk about the Swan River, which will be the focus of my contribution, I endorse the comments made by the member for South Perth about the racing industry having sufficient funds to ensure not just the success of the industry and its ongoing effectiveness, but also the investment back into the re-homing of horses that have been retired from racing. I say that because I am a member of an organisation called Second Chance Horse Rescue, which re-homes thousands of horses every year. Its statistics show that 80 per cent of the horses that it re-homes, either dying from malnutrition or from untreated injuries, are ex-racehorses that have been passed on and have not been cared for correctly. That is not always the fault of the owner or the trainer. Frankly, owners quite often do not even know what happens to a horse once they have lost interest in it. My experience has been that trainers try to re-home horses effectively, but people can lose track of the horses. They go to other places. People take them on thinking that they know what they are doing, but they do not. Six months later we end up with a horse like the one that arrived at my house on 29 November last year, which was 1.2 on the Department of Agriculture and Food's nine-point emaciation scale. I could not look at the 17.2-hand, four-year-old thoroughbred without asking questions about the racing industry and how these horses are treated. It had thrush in all four feet and huge fungal infections all over its coat—it was just a mass of infection—and was barely able to stand up. It had come from a race track and had ended up at the slaughterhouse, and was then rescued and re-homed to my place.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** Sometimes a racehorse is about to be retired and a family says that the young daughter would love to have a horse. The girl rides the horse but then gets a bit older and finds other interests, and that is the problem; the horse then gets neglected.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** That is one of the scenarios; the member is quite right. I fully agree with the member. There are a multitude of them. I do not want to go on too much because that is the subject of another debate. There are strategies in the eastern states whereby the racing industry works with Equestrian Australia and it funds the re-homing of horses. It is a really good program that works with the national coaching bodies in Equestrian Australia.

I turn now to a discussion about the Swan River, which is directly relevant to this bill, and to the casino levy that we welcomed in this state several years ago. I think the member for Rockingham had a great deal to do with that levy. The levy is about \$3 million a year. About \$9 million has been raised over its life. One would think that \$3 million would be a pretty good investment to make in the Swan River; indeed, it is the tip of the iceberg. I will run through a few figures that indicate the level of restoration work and the damage perpetrated on our river by the introduction of phosphates and other sorts of non-organic contaminants, and then I will pose the question of how far the \$1 million of this levy that is divided between 21 councils for foreshore restoration goes. That is how much the Swan River Trust has been able to reinvest across 21 councils. I raised my eyebrows slightly at the thought that \$5 million will go towards the Heirisson Island project, which would, in my view and in the view of the residents of my electorate of Maylands, be far better spent on the restoration of one of our iconic tourism destinations—the Swan River. Nine kilometres of the river runs through my electorate.

I will read a couple of quotes. The first quote is from the director of the Conservation Council of Western Australia, who, one might think, would be fairly critical of conservation work, no matter which government is in power. Last year Piers Versteegen said —

The river is in a state of collapse. Every year we have to pump oxygen into it to keep it going. The recent dolphin deaths have highlighted the extent to which the river system is under pressure, the dolphins being similar to the canaries once used in coal mines.

I will refer to that quote later, but I also want to read a quote of Shelley Taylor-Smith. Some members in the chamber today attended a fundraising luncheon for Ngala last week. We were very lucky that the guest speaker was Shelley Taylor-Smith, who is a very well known marathon swimmer. She is a remarkable Western Australian woman. It was a very pleasurable lunch, and I am sure that members enjoyed it as much as I did, especially as I won a raffle prize; I was very chuffed about that. Returning to my topic of the Swan River, I will quote Shelley Taylor-Smith when she spoke about the river and the waterways. She is a member of an organisation called Save Our Swan. This article states —

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

The Swan River's plight became apparent when water quality tests were requested by the sponsor of a 1.3km Perth open water swim Ms Taylor-Smith attempted to organise ...

The event was to be held in 2008 —

“I had swimmers saying ‘you are not going to get me in there, it’s too dirty’,” she said.

“The river is the blood, heart and soul that pumps the city. If nothing changes, it will be worse for future generations.”

In May last year I held a forum on the Swan River in my electorate. Seventy concerned members of my constituency attended the forum. I will go through some of the key issues that they raised with me at the time, because I think they have great resonance in this debate. The number one priority that they rated as needing immediate action was increased funding for river shore restoration. The next priorities were increased support for the riverbank restoration program and the erosion works that go with that program; phase out highly soluble nutrients in fertilisers for all users, including agricultural users, to reduce nutrient pollutants going into the river; introduce a star rating system for fertiliser products; address producer and supply chain responsibilities; and, finally, improve the sustainability of urban development along the river. It is worth mentioning those issues before looking at them specifically. It provides a bit of background to the issues that the people in my electorate think are important. My electorate is no different from any other metropolitan electorate that the river runs through. There are areas of high-density living on the river and there are some beautiful foreshore areas, but all the foreshore areas are in urgent need of restoration. I will talk about some of the dollars going into that restoration.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Do you realise that this bill actually will not change what the previous minister put in place?

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Is that the \$3 million?

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** It will not change that.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Is the \$5 million separate or is it part of it? Where will the money for Heirisson Island come from?

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** This bill authorises us to use up to \$5 million, should I make the decision to do so. The authorisation that the previous minister gave for the rivers is actually continued in this agreement.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** It is very good to hear that. I would like to endorse the words of the minister—if he chooses to do so. I do not think the minister should be choosing to use a lot of that money on anything but the restoration of the Swan River.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** That is actually part of it, and I will talk about that, because Heirisson Island happens to be in the middle of the Swan River.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I know that the Mayor of South Perth was the head of the Western Australian Local Government Association group—I cannot remember the name of the group; I think it is LG21—that released a somewhat controversial report last year suggesting that in order to raise the money needed to fix the Swan River, every single Western Australian should be charged \$100 a year.

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** That went over like a lead balloon!

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** It did, and I am not surprised by that. I am not saying that I would endorse it in any way, shape or form, but it shows the level of funding that is required and why every cent should be kept for the restoration of the Swan River and not be spent on any other issue to do with the Swan River. The riverbank areas along the nine kilometres of the Swan River that run through my electorate have been classified by the City of Bayswater into three priority areas. The priority 1 riverbank area is about 1.29 kilometres, priority 2 is about 2.25 kilometres, and priority 3 is 3.4 kilometres. The City of Bayswater estimates that it will cost \$7 million to restore the foreshore areas just in that city. If that is indexed for inflation and other cost increases, the cost after 10 years is expected to be around \$10 million. That is double the city's annual budget. As I have said, at the moment the state provides riverbank funding of about \$1 million across all 21 councils along the Swan River. Members can appreciate that that means that each council, if it is lucky, might get about \$100 000 a year. According to the City of Bayswater's calculations, it would take 50 to 100 years to fix the shore erosion in Bayswater and Maylands. That is the extent of the urgent need for resources for the Swan River. I also mention another dollar figure. I do not want to sound like I am reading a shopping list; I am trying to juxtapose the two arguments of spending money on other issues to do with the Swan River and spending money on the much-needed restoration of the river. A program audited some of the 198 000 small to medium-sized businesses in Western Australia that are along the drainage networks that drain directly into the Swan River. That was

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

originally administered through Perth Region NRM, and funding went to various shires for some auditing to be done of businesses along the banks of the Swan River and in industrial areas. The shires found that of the businesses audited that feed materials directly into the Bayswater main drain, about 30 per cent had toxic materials pouring directly into the groundwater and the river. But by the time the shires had finished educating those businesses, just by the mere fact that they were on the premises offering to help and educate, it had been reduced to only two per cent, and they were hopeful that that could be reduced to zero by the time they had finished with those small businesses. Not many businesses ended up being fined; most changed their practices voluntarily after they understood the extent of the problem and the impact it was having.

Perth Region NRM did an estimated costing on what would be effective funding to continue that program. Local government could have conducted about 20 000 audits, and last year the City of Bayswater, even in the absence of state and federal government funding, carried out audits. The federal government provided the pilot funding, but I think it dried up, if members will excuse the pun, and the state government stepped in with some funding to continue the program; I think that funding has now ended. The City of Bayswater, and many other cities I am sure, was taking advantage of this auditing program to try to stop toxic materials being discharged into the main drain, and it simply will not have the funding to continue. If \$5 million had been allocated to this business auditing program, which could have been done very easily, it would have helped small businesses improve their practices, thereby improving the health of the Swan River.

Work needs to be done on upgrading the existing paths along the foreshore by replacing the missing bits of pathway along the banks of the Swan River. I understand that state government support for trail development has been limited to one funding program of \$1.75 million for the whole state. At a conservative estimate, the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council suggests that it would cost around \$7.1 million to fund that program in its entirety. If the government chose to invest in that program, it would offer major tourism benefits for our state. Opening up the river in a controlled and environmentally secure way is a much more intelligent way of spending \$5 million.

At the beginning of my contribution I talked about non-nutrient contaminants. In March 2009, the Swan River Trust released a non-nutrient contaminant report that documented the results of a three-year study to determine the nature of contaminants delivered to and present in the Swan–Canning river system. The assessment identified and quantified many contaminants, and subcatchments of potential concern were identified and prioritised for further help. The Maylands subcatchment was ranked as the number one priority, having the following contaminants present that exceeded the international guidelines: organochlorine pesticides and metals and faecal material; and potential issues with herbicides, petroleum hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. That is the biology and chemical test for the day! Bayswater main drain was ranked as the number two priority, with organochlorine pesticides and heavy metals, plus a potential issue with herbicides and petroleum hydrocarbons.

Non-nutrient contaminants in the Swan River are a huge problem, and I am happy to say that the Minister for Environment has stepped up to help the City of Bayswater manage the Bayswater main drain over the next three years. I stress the need for Minister Waldron to make sure that any levy collected by these amendments is directly channelled into ensuring that some restoration work can commence on the Swan River, and to making sure that the many volunteers who generously step forward because they are incredibly concerned about the health of their Swan River, and because they use it for recreation and a backdrop to their lives, will be supported in their work and for the value they bring in providing their labour to restore the banks of the Swan River.

In closing, I make a plea about the fertiliser action plan, which is not directly related to the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011 but is related to the need to restore the Swan River. I urge the minister to lobby his colleague the Minister for Environment on the phase-out of nitrogen and phosphate and similar kinds of water-soluble fertilisers as quickly as possible. The minister may remember that his government stepped back from the mandatory phase-out of water-soluble fertilisers and decided that there should be a voluntary adoption scheme. It is very clear that a voluntary adoption scheme around water-safe fertilisers is not an effective way of protecting our river, and it never will be. I urge Minister Waldron to lobby the Minister for Environment to implement a mandatory fertiliser action plan to phase out the very dangerous nitrogen and phosphorus contaminants contained in water-soluble fertilisers.

The minister has assured us that this levy, particularly the money referred to as the Heirisson Island sculpture components, will not necessarily be spent on attractive figurines and statues, as the name might indicate. He said that it will be spent on river restoration work, and that will enable the Swan River Trust to continue its valuable restoration work. That was one of my main concerns.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan)** [12.16 pm]: I wish to make a short contribution to the second reading debate on the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011. As has been stated by my colleagues, the opposition supports the bill but it has some concerns about the funding for the Swan River Trust.

I will pick up on some of the points made by my colleagues. The member for Rockingham noted that there has been a drop in the expenditure forecast for the Swan River Trust. In 2010–11, it had a budget of \$12.128 million, and that will drop to \$11.249 million next year. This side of the house is concerned about the Swan River Trust's funding, given its role in looking after the river.

My electorate encompasses some of the Swan River—I say the best part of the Swan River!

**Ms L.L. Baker:** Settle!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** There have always been issues, as members have mentioned, about the health of the river; we heard about what has happened to the dolphins over the past few years.

I will raise an issue that has arisen in my electorate before I go on to talk more generally about the bill. An oxygenation plant has just been installed at the end of Caversham Road. It is all about promoting the health of the river, and no-one opposes that, but the construction that has been erected detracts from the aesthetic appeal of the valley. Some neighbours have spoken to me about what has been constructed—that is, a green shed with a barbed wire fence at the top—and the significant noise it is making and the visual impact it is having. I wrote to the minister to ask whether improvements could be made to that plant to make it less of an eyesore around that beautiful part of the river. I hope the minister responds by doing something to fix it, either by the planting of vegetation or putting a roof on the plant so that the barbed wire fence can be removed, or by putting some limestone blocks in front of it to ensure that it is not an eyesore, which will all take money, of course. The Swan River Trust's budget is decreasing, and it seems that it will not receive much additional money from this agreement, except for the \$5.5 million for the sculpture park.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Nothing changes.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Nothing changes; that is what we are saying. No additional money is put aside for the health of the Swan River.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** It continues. As I said, the previous minister authorised it. I'll explain it when I go through; you don't quite understand it.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Is additional money going to the health of the Swan River?

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** The authorisation, as given by the previous minister, remains, so that is up to the Burswood Park Board. I'll explain how it works.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We are not saying that the government is taking away money —

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** There is \$3 million budgeted next year.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I know. We are not arguing that the minister is taking that away.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** We haven't; I just want to make that clear.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We understand that point. The member for Rockingham, the then Minister for Racing and Gaming, struck a very good agreement that injected \$3 million of additional funding over five years for the health of the Swan River. That remains, as we understand.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** Actually, \$12 million has gone in, so you don't understand. There has actually been \$12 million. Don't worry; I'll explain it to you when I get to speak.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Is that \$12 million per annum?

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** No. There's been \$12 million invested in the Swan since that.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is \$3 million per annum.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** It gets allocated—\$12 million.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I cannot wait until the minister explains it to me! We are not saying that the government is taking the money away; we are saying that this is a huge missed opportunity. We have all acknowledged, including the member for South Perth, that we need to do more to protect the health of the river. I think that is what we are all saying.



Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

I wrote to the Minister for Environment; Water about the issue of the oxygenation plant and what can be done to try to ensure that the Swan River is utilised by everyone, including people in areas such as Caversham, Henley Brook and my electorate, and that there is not a focus simply on one part of the river.

I cannot finish my contribution without mentioning the sculpture park. I am almost beyond words! The last time I visited a sculpture park was in Moscow, where I saw the busts of former communist leaders. It is a tourist attraction.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Brendon's going to have a bust out on Heirisson Island!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I remember it was a cold winter's day and I had to walk kilometres to get to the sculpture park. I think it was opposite Gorky Park. It was a very surreal experience. There were busts of Lenin and Stalin and all the former communist leaders. Therefore, I hope this government is not modelling our sculpture park on that one! I would hate to see —

**Dr A.D. Buti:** What about the agrarian socialists of the National Party?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It could be! It could be the bust of "Emperor Barnett".

**Ms L.L. Baker:** After the castle!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** There could be the let-them-eat-cake Minister for Education bust. It could be amazing!

**Mr P. Papalia:** It could be "Brendon Grylls' Cargo Cult" bust!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** The Brendon Grylls bust!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman):** Members, it is very amusing, but we have to get through this legislation. Only one member is on her feet and I ask that you allow her to be heard clearly.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I am waiting with bated breath on the composition of this sculpture park. As I said, I sincerely hope that it is not a place for an "Emperor Barnett" bust to be built.

Of course, a sculpture park is underway. I have to say that that was probably the worst decision of the previous government! That is on St Georges Terrace, of course, and we will not talk about it too much. Let us hope this sculpture park does not replicate that very bad decision and have busts of other Liberal leaders!

This is all about priorities, minister. I know that the government is not cutting funding, as the minister pointed out, but it is also a missed opportunity. As all those members representing areas near or including the Swan River have said, this bill is a missed opportunity. It is about priorities; the government thinks that the Premier's palace is a priority, and now the sculpture park. As I said, I cannot wait to find out what the sculptures will be, and I hope that it does not replicate the Moscow sculpture park, near Gorky Park, which has sculptures of former communist leaders. I am sure it will not! But we are looking forward —

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** They would've been sitting over with you!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I think probably next to you, mate! They are more likely to sit next to the member than many of us, actually.

As I said, I cannot wait to hear more details about not only the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill, but also the sculpture park. I look forward to that.

**MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [12.24 pm]:** I, too, rise to make some comments about the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011 because it refers specifically to a very significant asset within my electorate.

I strongly support some of the comments the member for South Perth made in his contribution to the second reading debate. I also note the contribution made by the member for Rockingham, who in 2006, as the then Minister for the Environment; Racing and Gaming, put out a press release about this matter. At the time, I fulfilled my role of standing behind the minister nodding my head dutifully as I agreed wholeheartedly with the comments he made—this was just outside Burswood Casino near the boat club—as he announced that more money would go into the Swan River. I mean that in terms of the health of the Swan River as opposed to money being tipped into the river! I think that the member for South Perth is right, as are the members for West Swan and Maylands and other members who made the point, in indicating that this bill is a missed opportunity. Nobody has made the allegation that the minister has cut funding, but I think we need now, because of what has come out —

**Mr J.E. McGrath:** I didn't say it was a missed opportunity; what I said was that governments of either persuasion have really let us down with regard to funding of the Swan River.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** It is a missed opportunity, member for South Perth!

Several members interjected.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The member for South Perth just made a strong argument for why this is a huge missed opportunity by the minister to ensure more money goes towards the health of the Swan River. I know that the member for South Perth is a regular walker along the Swan River. He loves to get out and about and gaze into the river, and he enjoys the benefits of it fronting his electorate, as it does mine, and, indeed, the Canning River that used to, but not anymore, border the other half of my electorate.

The member for Maylands highlighted that Piers Verstegen made the point that there have been deaths of dolphins from an unknown cause in the river over the past couple of years. A lot of evidence has come out in the past couple of years about the health of the Swan River, so maybe now is a good opportunity, minister, to consider that perhaps we are not investing sufficient amounts of money in the health of the Swan River. The Mayor of South Perth, James Best, highlighted the fact that it is costing all those authorities—I think there are 21—with the Swan River as part of their local government boundary, huge amounts of money. I think it is time—I make this point not to be critical of the minister—for the government to have a strategy on how to deal with not only the health of the Swan River, but also those issues raised by the Mayor of South Perth, such as the river walls and the cost burden on some of those councils. I commend the City of South Perth because it has removed some of those walls and replaced them with beaches, which I think has had a great impact on the Swan River, particularly in the area with which I am very familiar. The member for West Swan made the point that there is a drop in money to the Swan River Trust from just over \$12 million to \$11 million. I think that in light of the fact that the state's revenue base is significantly higher than was the case when the member for Rockingham made his announcement in 2006, now is the time to reconsider the amount of money that we spend as a government and as a community on the health of the Swan River.

I, too, like the member for West Swan, note the sculpture park on Heirisson Island. Heirisson Island is not in my electorate; it is in the member for Perth's electorate. However, I like to claim a little ownership over Heirisson Island. I run across it occasionally when I go out, and my mother walks across it on her way to Trinity College. It is a little asset that is underutilised by Western Australians. I am very curious, like the member for West Swan, about what the sculpture park will eventually look like. I hope it is not communist-esque in its outlook and does not have standing next to Yagan, dare I say, a bust of the Premier. I think it would have to be a rather robust bust of the Premier to accommodate him. Maybe the minister can start to think about the sort of personalities we can look forward to seeing in the sculpture park on Heirisson Island. Maybe Barry Sargeant, who I note is sitting in the gallery, might enjoy seeing a bust of himself, or perhaps there could be busts of directors general, past and present, across Heirisson Island. I know that would attract people from my electorate to Heirisson Island to have a look —

**Ms L.L. Baker:** Member, there will not be many from the Liberal Party, because not many of them have busts.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is true. I do not know what to make of that. The Burswood Park Board does a wonderful job. It has been given a significant amount of money to develop the sculpture park on Heirisson Island. I daresay ultimately the Premier has his eye on a life-size statue that can be seen from the moon. He could put it right outside Hale House. Right outside the Premier's palace is where ultimately the member for Cottesloe would like to see his rather rotund clay figure sitting as he gazes back on the palace upon which he has spent the better part of \$30 million of taxpayers' money. I will conclude, Mr Acting Speaker—I can see he has an anxious look about him—by bringing it back to the bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman):** Member for Victoria Park, I am not wishing to bust in on your conversation.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Dear, oh dear! If only we could take points of order for bad humour. The opposition supports this bill. I want to highlight the work of Burswood Casino. The amount of money that is being spent on the Burswood entertainment precinct is fundamentally changing what Burswood once was. It is no longer just a casino; it is an entertainment precinct. When the Premier finally gets around to making the decision about putting a major stadium at Burswood, there will be an opportunity of reinvigorating interest in that part of the river, which could result in significant environmental outcomes. Once the Premier has finished erecting a statue of his own bust outside the Premier's palace, he can finally deal with ensuring that the major stadium goes to Burswood. Like the member for West Swan, I question the priorities of government. Five million dollars is a significant amount of money to be spending on sculptures. At a time when \$200 000 is being cut from Carson Street School's budget for conductive education, to find \$5 million for the Heirisson Island sculpture park, whilst I am not critical of that in itself, suggests to me that this is a government whose priorities are fundamentally flawed.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington)** [12.32 pm]: I will speak briefly on the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011. I want to home in on the \$5 million for the sculpture park on Heirisson Island. I am not necessarily opposing it. In fact, I think public art is a very important investment of the taxpayers' money. However, I want to highlight two particular issues. Firstly, the government is spending \$400 million to build a skate park along the foreshore. The government calls it the foreshore development, but it is actually —

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** I think you might have got the figure wrong on that.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, it is \$400 million. There is a \$130 million recovery from potential land sales, but the government's investment is \$400 million. I have got it right. I have had answers on this. The point I am making is that that is a disaster of public infrastructure. The government would be much better off saving the money on the foreshore development, which is a dog, and spending it on some public art along the waterfront. In other cities in the world that have public art on the waterfront, that is a place where tourists will congregate. I have not been to Chicago, but people tell me that at the Millennium Park, there is funny shaped public art, where people can see their own distorted reflections. It is used in a number of movies. That is the sort of public art that will actually draw people to an open space. The government would be much better off spending some of the money on public art at Heirisson Island and spending some of the \$400 million that is being wasted on the skate park at the Esplanade on building something interesting for tourists to visit, rather than the inlet it is proposing. Four hundred million dollars could buy a lot of public art. It could buy half an Indigenous museum; a lot could be done with it.

If the government was sensible, instead of spending \$5 million on public art at Heirisson Island, it could save some of that \$400 million to spend on Heirisson Island and other interesting public artworks that would attract people —

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** They don't actually go to the sculptures on the island. I have tried to explain that before.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** That is fine. What I am saying is that \$5 million is a good investment for the taxpayers of this state. I am saying that, instead of spending the \$5 million that it is proposed to be taken out of the money that the casino pays, it should be taken out of savings from the wasteful approach that the government has to other projects such as the waterfront. There is \$2 billion in projects in the state budget that are vanity projects of the Premier. There is the waterfront project. There is the sinking of the bus station in the city when it should not be sunk; it should be included in other infrastructure—the first storey of an office building or something like that. There is the Oakajee port project, which is an iron ore port. As the Premier explained to us at estimates, it is only an iron ore port that is being built.

*Point of Order*

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** I know where the member is going with this, but we have gone over a lot of stuff. We probably need to get back to the bill in this case.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Cannington, I draw your attention to the bill before the house and ask you to direct your comments to it.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Okay. A lot of other money is being wasted by this government that could be used on the Heirisson Island sculpture park. I am not objecting to the \$5 million investment in the park; I am just saying that this money should be available for other purposes. I want to give two specific purposes that directly relate to the Swan River. A number of members have talked about these sorts of issues. The first one is the fire damage in the Canning River Regional Park. On the day of the big fire in Roleystone and Kelmscott, there was also a fire in the Canning River Regional Park. It burnt out about 20 per cent of the park. We have some great volunteer groups that keep that park up to standard. I have written to the Minister for Environment asking for a special allocation, which he has not been prepared to give. The government could spend some of the \$5 million allocated to Burswood on those special rehabilitation works. The volunteers tell me that the real trick is to bear in mind that over winter, after the rains, the first thing that will regrow in the fire-damaged areas is noxious weeds, and we need to do something to deal with that.

The second thing that that \$5 million could be spent on is the upgrade of Hester Park. Hester Park is the continuation of the Canning River Regional Park along the banks of the Canning River into the City of Gosnells. The City of Gosnells has allocated some minor works funding to that project. It is a worthy project, but much money is being wasted by the government that could be spent on that worthy project. As has been explained by members previously, these Burswood moneys have tended to be spent on improvements to save and improve the Canning and Swan Rivers. If the government could allocate that \$5 million to Hester Park, it would make a real difference. Five million dollars would bring Hester Park up to the standards of the Canning River Regional Park.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

I make it clear to members in the house and to you, Mr Acting Speaker, that the Canning River Regional Park and Hester Park are actually the same piece of land; it is just that one is in the City of Canning and one is in the City of Gosnells. Although it has been a long-term project—with 20 years of hard work of the volunteers and the former member for Victoria Park, Hon Geoff Gallop, and the council—to get the Canning River Regional Park up to standard, the same investment has not been made in Hester Park, and it needs to be made.

Do not get me wrong. I am very happy to see the minister invest \$5 million. If the minister is going to tell us that it is all about infrastructure to support the creation of the sculpture garden, or whatever that is, that is really good. All I am saying, though, is that, given that the government is wasting hundreds of millions of dollars elsewhere around the city on projects that are just vanity projects for the Premier, the minister would be much better off saving this \$5 million for something that will have a real impact in the local community that I represent and that other members represent. Five million dollars would go a long way to helping us improve the Swan and Canning Rivers.

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro)** [12.40 pm]: In speaking on the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011 and this authorisation of \$5 million, I want to speak on behalf of the local governments adjacent to the City of Perth that also have responsibility for maintenance of the river foreshore. Another issue that I want to speak about is that I believe that, in future, questions will be asked, and the government will be subject to a lot more scrutiny than it has been to date, about the focus and support that it is giving to local governments outside the metropolitan area compared with those inside the metropolitan area. That issue is clearly going to arise as a result of royalties for regions and the country local government fund.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** This bill deals only with this authorisation of \$5 million. That is all this bill does. It authorises us to do this. It does not say that we are going to do it. It authorises it, in association with the City of Perth.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is only with the City of Perth. A lot of other local governments also have responsibility for maintenance of the river foreshore. All those local governments would like to share in the money that will be authorised as a result of this bill. I do not know what amount of oversight the minister has of allocations from the Swan River Trust —

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** I do not have anything to do with the Swan River Trust. This is for the Burswood Park Board, not the Swan River Trust.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** But this is money that the minister will have the opportunity to have some oversight of and influence on. I am not criticising the minister at all. I am just saying, like others, that there may be a missed opportunity here, in that the minister could have expanded the potential beneficiaries of this funding beyond the one item that we are talking about.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** The Burswood Park Board can choose to do that. What we are doing in this bill is changing an agreement between the government and Burswood Casino.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** If that is the case, I want to lay on the table a suggestion that if the board is given the flexibility to allocate funding more liberally than just specifically for this project, it consider the demands and the challenges that are being confronted by all the local governments that have responsibility for the river foreshore. I am straying a little. But in the allocation of funding to support local governments, there is a disparity in funding between local governments in the metropolitan area and local governments outside the metropolitan area. That is nowhere more evident than in the creation of the country local government fund. That is a significant fillip for local governments outside the metropolitan area, and I commend the government for that. But the consequence will be that the metropolitan local governments that are not entitled to this assistance will be asking: where will the money for us be coming from? Under the previous government, there was an outer metropolitan development fund—I think that was the terminology; I may be wrong. That fund has been cancelled. Therefore, local governments in the metropolitan area have a legitimate right to ask: does this government care about us? This is yet another example of how metropolitan local governments might have been helped out by this government. However, the government has failed to take that opportunity. I hope that, within the parameters of what is proposed in this bill, there will be an opportunity for all the local governments that are responsible for maintaining the river foreshore to benefit, and not just the City of Perth, which has responsibility for Heirisson Island.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** If I can make one point to clarify, the Burswood Park Board is limited to the Swan and Canning Rivers.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am talking about those councils—there are a lot of them—that front the Swan and Canning Rivers. All those councils are within the metropolitan area.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** You will see when I go through the bill that there have been benefits over the years all along the rivers.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is wonderful, if that is the case. If the board will be given some flexibility, and if this will not constrain it in any way from providing an opportunity for those local governments to tap into some funding, that will be great.

The reason I was drawn to this line of attack is that we have some fierce advocates on this side for regional councils. The member for Albany, the member for Collie–Preston, the member for Kimberley and the member for Pilbara fight very hard for their regional councils, and we have to respect them for that. I do not know if there are any such advocates on the other side. Those members have for a long time dedicated themselves to ensuring that regional councils get their representation in the state Parliament. However, they have been so successful in doing that that maybe we need to remind some ministers in cabinet that there are also councils in the metropolitan area. The reason I raise that point is that in estimates it was brought to my attention that there is a national partnership agreement to support local and regional governments. Under that agreement, regional local governments were given a chunk of money—\$2.351 million—from the federal government. That had to be matched by the state government, so they were also given \$2.4 million from the state government. That money was supposed to go to local governments across the state to encourage local government reform. However, where did that money go? I can tell the house that, with the exception of three councils in the metropolitan area, all that money went into the regions, to join the money from the country local government fund, all of which went to the regions as well. Therefore, there is an absolute disparity in the allocation of funding by this government to local governments. That is potentially as a result of the strong advocacy by the Labor regional members of Parliament. However, the consequence is that the government now appears to be neglecting those metropolitan councils—there are a lot of them—which front the Swan and Canning Rivers and which desperately need additional assistance to maintain and enhance the quality of those rivers, because the quality is going downhill.

The opportunity to do that is provided in this bill. If the minister is able to tell me that the government has taken that into account, and that the Burswood Park Board will be given that flexibility and will be actively seeking to support those local governments that front those rivers, then all power to the minister. However, I would suggest to the minister that he bear in mind in the future, with any other legislation that he has responsibility for, that this government is starting to look very one-sided. A lot of people live in the metropolitan area. I am not saying this to disparage royalties for regions. I am also certainly not saying this to disparage the great advocacy that has been undertaken for many years by the wonderful Labor regional members of Parliament in particular, who have been so effective that it resulted in the minister taking up this stance on royalties for regions—a stance that got him into government. But I remind the minister that this government is starting to look very one-sided. This bill is a great opportunity to rectify that. I commend the minister if he has taken that into account and if the Burswood Park Board does intend to act in that manner. But the Minister for Racing and Gaming, and the two other National Party ministers, need to remember that they are ministers for the whole of Western Australia, not just the people in the Wheatbelt.

**MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin — Minister for Racing and Gaming)** [12.47 pm] — in reply: I thank members for their contributions to this debate on the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill 2011. There were a lot of contributions, and I must admit a lot of the contributions seemed to assume that I was Minister for Environment; albeit, that is not a bad thing, because this bill will help the environment, funnily enough.

I have only a couple of minutes in which to speak before we go onto other business, so I will not go into the detail of the bill until we come back to this debate. However, I need to say from the start that the purpose of the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Amendment Bill is to ratify the twelfth supplementary agreement, which in turn amends the state agreement scheduled to the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Act 1985. This agreement has been reached. Either it will be supported today or it will not. I think that generally it will be supported.

Some good points have been raised by members, and I will try to address all the points that have been raised. Some criticism has been made of the time it has taken to get this bill to this place. However, this is a very important bill, and I want to make sure that we get it right.

**Mr J.N. Hyde:** What is your view on the statutes?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** The funding from this bill will not fund the statutes.

**Mr J.N. Hyde:** What is your view on the statutes?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** That is not for me to comment on. It is only a proposal. We will have to wait until it happens. I want to make one point clear from the start. Everyone assumes that the \$5 million will be taken out.

Acting Speaker; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath; Ms Lisa Baker;  
Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Paul Papalia

---

All this bill does is authorise us to do that. At the end of the day, I have to authorise that. When we get back to this debate after question time, I will go through what that \$5 million is for.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Will that clarify your second reading speech?

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Of course it will.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** Because this is where the cloud is.

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Yes. I can clarify that. I will be able to show that the bill will actually enhance the environment. Members are forgetting that Heirisson Island is smack bang in the middle of the Swan River.

**Mr J.N. Hyde:** Too right; in a very good electorate!

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** Yes, and I suppose it has a good local member too!

**Mr J.N. Hyde:** It has!

**Mr T.K. WALDRON:** There you go!

What I wanted to say was that I have worked very closely with Burswood Casino in negotiating this agreement. I think Burswood Casino management staff are outstanding. They are extremely good to deal with. I think the member for Rockingham will agree with me. They have a real care for this state. Yes, they run a private entity; yes, they are there to make money; and, yes, they run a casino. But they are also excellent corporate citizens.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 4383.]