

PEEL–HARVEY CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT BILL 2014

Restoration to Notice Paper — Motion

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [10.53 am]: I move —

That the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill 2014 be restored to the point it reached prior to its removal from the notice paper on Tuesday, 20 September 2016.

I would like to elaborate a little on the reasoning behind the need to restore this bill to the notice paper. The Peel–Harvey catchment area is an incredibly fragile environment and it constantly faces threats of one form or another. At this time of year, it is especially vulnerable to things such as algal blooms. The change of daylight hours—the increasing length of days—and the rapid warming of water bodies can lead to explosions in populations of particular algae species that deplete the waters of oxygen and can then kill marine life in the estuary. I fear that such a situation could be just around the corner. It is incumbent on those of us in this Parliament to make sure that we have, ready to go, the sorts of legislative mechanisms that could deal with this problem. Over the last 30 years, a host of legislative and regulatory mechanisms have not proven to be highly successful so we need to look at taking things a step further. That is exactly what the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill will provide for—an all-encompassing, catchment management authority capability, such as we used to have with the Swan River Trust for the Swan and Canning Rivers. The Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act is still in place but the role of the Swan River Trust has been weakened, as the staff from that body were placed in the Department of Parks and Wildlife’s Rivers and Estuaries division. They do not have the same connection with the community anymore; we have seen that change there.

With the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill 2014, we suggest that we provide for what we used to have with the Swan and Canning Rivers. That is why I think it is especially timely that we restore this bill to the notice paper. Should an emergency arise, we can keep face with the people of Western Australia and say, yes, that we are prepared to consider legislation that can take protections to a further stage. In the past, the public invested money in the creation of the Dawesville Cut. The idea was that the Dawesville Cut would flush the estuary out. Huge amounts of public money, especially given the dollar value from that time, went into the creation of the Dawesville Cut. A part of the package that was put together created the “State Planning Policy 2.1 Peel–Harvey Coastal Plain Catchment” policy and an environmental protection policy for the Peel–Harvey catchment. The environmental protection policy defined limits that were put on the nutrient load that should ever be allowed to flow down the Serpentine, Murray or Harvey Rivers into the Peel–Harvey catchment. That mechanism looked to be potentially feasible to control nutrient inflows but no, there is still an incredibly high risk of an algal bloom or some other incremental catastrophe in the estuary. For that reason, the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill needs to be restored to the notice paper—to keep faith with the people of Western Australia that we, as a Parliament, are ready to go with the right sorts of legislative mechanisms.

There are precious environmental features down there, such as the Ramsar wetland 482. This wetland provides a home to 86 species of waterbird, and 35 of those are international species. Some of them fly as far as 24 000 kilometres in a year. They come from northern Asia to feed on the mudflats there. We have an international responsibility. That is why this Parliament has to demonstrate that it is able and ready to deal with problems in the sense that we know how to deal with problems; our lever to pull in this Parliament is through legislation. It is very important to show that we are ready to go with that.

When we previously debated this legislation, it was found necessary to ask for a Governor’s message because, of course, there would be some budgetary implications of the passage of such legislation. I think the government should support that. I do not know that, at this stage, we have convinced the government of the need to support a Governor’s message to provide for the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill. However, with the passage of time and on reflection, I think that the government could come around to it. That debate has to be had. Should the unfortunate circumstances arise in which the aims and endeavours expressed in such documents as the “Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Rivers and Estuary of the Peel–Harvey System” are not being reached and we are not doing enough, we will have to go to this higher level of legislative control. Bear in mind, Madam Acting Speaker, that an estimate was provided to me in 2008 by the Peel–Harvey Catchment Council, in which the value of the Peel–Harvey estuary is in the order of \$360 million per annum, in terms of just fishing, tourism, boating and residential land values—and that is in 2008 dollars. There will be a huge financial stake here if we let this asset go into any further decline.

There are also quality-of-life issues. Many people have invested their life savings and chosen to retire to the Peel–Harvey area. I know that if the member for Mandurah were here, he would be highlighting this point. People have chosen to live there for the quality of life. That quality of life will deteriorate if we fail to manage the estuary properly and fail to have the proper structures in place to bring together all the interests, some of which are competing interests. Some people want to be able to jetski over any part of the estuary; others want to travel at high speed in various watercraft. People want to be able to use the estuary in all kinds of ways. An

agency is needed to manage all those sometimes competing interests, to make sure that there is compatibility and that all users' needs can be satisfied in some way. That is why the creation of a Peel–Harvey catchment trust is at the core of this legislation. The issue that we need to be debating is the Peel–Harvey catchment trust's role. There is also discussion in the bill about the need for a development control area. Again, that is the sort of thing that we need to discuss. That is why I am very pleased to have moved that this bill be restored to the notice paper so that we can debate the legislation that has been presented and have a thorough airing of the issues so that we as a Parliament can keep pace with the people of Western Australia and demonstrate that we are doing our legislative task, making sure that we have legislation that is ready to go to deal with the sort of the environmental and ecological emergency that could arise in the Peel–Harvey catchment. I commend this legislation to the house. I realise that at this stage my task is, firstly, to make sure that the bill is restored. I therefore commend this motion to the house seeking to have the Peel–Harvey Catchment Management Bill 2014 restored to the point it had reached prior to its removal from the notice paper on Tuesday, 20 September 2016.

Question put and passed.