

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 March.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [4.20 pm]: I rise to speak to the Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill 2015 and I begin by noting that it is a bill that tackles a wideranging series of amendments to the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. It tackles areas including the amalgamation of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority with the Conservation Commission; the issue of Aboriginal traditional owner vesting for various conservation areas; issues around designations within marine parks; the removal from the act of a scientific advisory committee; some amendments to regional parks; and the empowering of the proposed conservation and parks commission with the ability to coordinate regional park planning. It also makes the director general of the Department of Parks and Wildlife responsible for fire, alters the leases for recreation and tourism within the conservation estate and seeks to make smoother the process for excising land out of state forest. There are also a number of minor administrative amendments.

As we can see, this bill tackles a number of areas. It is the sort of bill on which, one would imagine, the government would want to consult quite widely. The opposition was given a very comprehensive briefing from the director general of the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Mr Jim Sharp, and from Mr Gordon Wire. I think there may have been a couple of other people at the briefing as well, including the principal policy officer from the minister's office. It was a very useful briefing indeed but I have to say that others who sought briefings were not given them, and I will just dwell on that point because I think it is a serious issue. We have in the environment sphere so many community-based organisations that have so much expertise. They are organisations that do not suffer from the problem of a lack of corporate memory. Often these community organisations know the history of various conservation initiatives and the history of a national park or a regional park. They know these histories better than the bureaucracy does, better than the people in the public service do, better than the people in the environmental consultancies do, and better than people in various businesses do. They know this because they have been doing this work for so long, whereas in the public service, the environmental consultancies and the various corporates that have an interest in this area, there is a continual turnover; there is not the same degree of stability. People have a loyalty to various community-based organisations that is really quite remarkable.

This point might amuse the director general and his advisers, but there is one community-based group known as WANPARA—the WA National Parks and Reserves Association. In my previous life as director of the Conservation Council, I used to get many lengthy emails from WANPARA with numerous appendices and a style of writing that had all kinds of highlighting and different colours indicating different levels of importance in the email, as to the content. There were very lengthy discussions about the merits of national park extensions and national parks in themselves. During my time at the Conservation Council, a particular focus for WANPARA was regional parks, which is one of the points we are going to drill into on this bill. I was quite pleased but somewhat surprised recently to receive an email from WANPARA in the lead-up to my consideration of this bill; I say I was somewhat surprised because it was my understanding that the key mobilisers of WANPARA were deceased! So it was something of a surprise to see in my email inbox an email from WANPARA, written in the same fashion—a style that had often been attributed to one Mr Graeme Rundle, a man to whom this state owes a great debt and who passed away a couple of years ago. He was, in fact, with the Conservation Commission, and I will talk about that body in a bit more detail. But yes, I received an email from WANPARA about the nature of these changes to our regional park planning, which is a very important issue.

I will continue with the issue of the lack of consultation with the community groups, the groups that have so much knowledge and so much to contribute, because it is a disappointing point. There are also a few areas on which I want to commend the Minister for Environment, but I am afraid this is not one of those areas. This is an area of serious disappointment.

I have spoken before in this place about the Urban Bushland Council WA Inc; it is a tremendous organisation that has a great passion for and knowledge about the Bush Forever sites around Perth and regional parks. It has an extensive knowledge about those areas. It wanted to share its knowledge with the minister, and wrote to him on 27 February 2015. The letter states —

Dear Minister

...

We are aware that some 70 Bush Forever Areas, proposed to be managed by your Department, have still not yet been transferred to the Crown and vested in the Conservation Commission, and proper government funding has not been allocated to actively manage these priceless natural assets for conservation.

The letter continues, further along —

Representatives of the Urban Bushland Council wish to request the opportunity of a meeting with you to discuss the proper management of Bush Forever Areas, and their essential connectivity across our fragmented urban landscape. This also includes the effective control of invasive weeds in these areas.

Bearing in mind that the proposal is that these areas be vested with the Conservation Commission, one would think that it would have been worthwhile for the minister to get the benefit of that wisdom because he was deliberating at the time on his preparations and considerations of the bill before us, which relates in part to the Conservation Commission and how it is going to work in the future.

I was very disappointed to see the response from the minister to the Urban Bushland Council. There was the usual acknowledgement of the letter and some recognition of the good work that the Urban Bushland Council does. The letter that the minister sent on 19 March 2015 states —

The work done by the Urban Bushland Council and its member groups in promoting and participating in the management of local bushland areas is greatly appreciated. The on-ground efforts of these groups to control invasive weeds and manage other impacts on Bush Forever sites underpin the maintenance of their biodiversity values. Unfortunately, I am currently unable to meet with you to discuss this matter but I am aware of the Urban Bushland Council's views from our previous meetings.

We have a bill before us about the future of 70-odd Bush Forever sites and how they would come under the responsibility of the Conservation Commission, but the minister did not want to meet with the Urban Bushland Council. I do not know whether the minister has had a meeting with the Urban Bushland Council since he received its letter. I do not believe that he has. That is disappointing. I would have thought that the UBC would be right up there on his radar of key stakeholder groups that he would want to keep up with. Perhaps, like me, he would be prepared for some fairly tough talk at those meetings. I assure the minister that I do not get an easy time at them. I respect the knowledge and wisdom that that group has. I will come to some of its work, especially its report card and the proceedings of a conference exploring Bush Forever. I will talk about the fact that this group is able to assemble and augment its work with the quality of work that is done in the public service and elsewhere to ensure that we have really good policy and environmental outcomes—yet the minister has declined to meet with the council, which I think was extremely disappointing; I am afraid that that is not an isolated event.

The Wilderness Society of WA, again, is a group with amazing knowledge of all sorts of environmental matters, particularly around protected areas. It sought a meeting with the minister but it was declined. The response was from the minister's principal policy adviser. Perhaps it was kept from the minister's eyes. It stated —

Dear Mr Robertson

Thank you for your recent email to Minister Jacob's electorate office regarding amendments to the CALM Act.

Minister Jacob has requested that I respond to you direct on his behalf.

As you have already been advised by the Director General of Parks and Wildlife, amendments to the CALM Act were introduced to the Legislative Assembly on 12 March 2015.

Given that this Bill has now been introduced to Parliament, it is appropriate to allow Members of Parliament to debate the merits of the proposed amendments when it is listed. Whilst briefings have been offered to all Parliamentarians, **individual stakeholder briefings are not available.**

As noted in this letter, this bill was introduced on 12 March. That is deemed to be some cut-off point for community consultation. I draw the minister's attention back to the letter from the Urban Bushland Council that was dated 27 February. The council requested a meeting then. That was declined and then the request from the Wilderness Society was declined as well, using the excuse that now that the bill is in this place, there can no longer be discussion with a group that has so much to contribute on this matter.

I find this pattern of refusal to meet with community groups really disturbing because so much knowledge can be gained from these groups. I note Mr Peter Robertson's comments about this refusal. He sent me an email stating —

Dear MP's

We tried but were refused a briefing from the Minister/DPaW on the proposed amendments to the CALM Act currently before parliament (not exactly sure where they are up to?).

Jacob refused a briefing saying that because the matter was before parliament no such briefing would be offered. Not that he or DPaW made any effort to brief ENGOS —

Environmental non-governmental organisations —

before it went to parliament to the best of my knowledge despite our obvious interest in it!

Although ENGOs generally support joint vesting —

This is one of the key things in this bill—joint vesting, which I will talk about in a lot more detail. This group supports joint vesting, has good knowledge of it and has the capacity to look at how it is done elsewhere in Australia. It could have brought that into the discussion. Mr Robertson goes on —

of conservation reserves with Traditional Owner/Native Title groups, we have a concern about the Bill as drafted.

This group has lots of knowledge and it was keen to share a concern it had. Mr Robertson goes on —

The Bill is based on a two stage vesting process for a given conservation reserve—first under the Land Admin Act to the Conservation Commission and then **subsequently** jointly vested in an Indigenous body under the CALM Act.

The concern is that there does not appear to be any timeframe within which the joint vesting must be completed, so the TO's —

Traditional owners —

may be told that it is going to happen but (going on past experience!) it may take years or forever.

If this is correct the Bill needs to be amended to include a requirement that the joint vesting be completed with (a year?) of the vesting or re-vesting process commencing.

cheers

Peter Robertson Campaigner: Kimberley; Great Western Woodlands

The Wilderness Society WA Inc.

... West Perth

I think Peter Robertson makes an excellent point. There should be some sort of time line. Perhaps if the minister or his staff or the department had met with the Wilderness Society before bringing the bill to this place, or if they had actively sought its advice perhaps, even once it had been tabled, that advice could have been forthcoming. We could have seen an amendment or something that the minister would have had in mind to deal with before he waited for the shadow minister to raise it. But, no, the decision was made not to discuss it and we have yet another example of poor community consultation.

Leaving that issue aside, I now turn to the merger of the Conservation Commission and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. As I have said, the Conservation Commission is the body with which the terrestrial conservation estate is vested. Similarly, those areas of marine park are vested with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. It is very interesting to see the following mission statement on the Conservation Commission's website, which states —

Our mission is to conserve the State's biological diversity and ensure the conservation estate is managed in an ecologically sustainable manner.

That is a neat definition, clarification or formalisation of the Conservation Commission's mission. It does not stop at the edge of the conservation estate. The key thing here is that the Conservation Commission has seen its responsibilities as being for the conservation of the state's biological diversity right across the state on all forms of land tenure, not just the eight per cent or so of land in those areas that are deemed to be International Union for Conservation of Nature categories I to IV and parts of the conservation estate. It is saying that the Conservation Commission sees its responsibility extending way beyond that small percentage of the surface area of Western Australia onto unallocated crown land, onto leasehold land and onto other forms of private land tenure as well, as it should.

We need a body that takes that overall view of things. Why? It is often the case that when a threatening process—to use this one example—is putting at risk one of our endangered species, one of our endangered ecological habitats or one of our listed priority flora species, that threatening process does not stop at the boundaries of the conservation estate but exists across the whole region. Biodiversity and the natural environment do not know cadastral boundaries or land tenure. Therefore, if we identify that a particular animal is at threat because of an invasive species and we introduce a pest control program of some sort, we cannot confine that to the conservation state. We need to take a statewide view. A classic example is feral cats. The minister has been trumpeting the virtues of the new Eradicat baiting system, and of course that will yield benefits for us. That is why we need an organisation that takes a broader perspective. That is why the management of the

conservation estate needs to be done in all the zones in the state. We cannot tackle only the conservation estate as it is formally designated; we need to go right across the state.

That is why I am particularly disappointed to hear the minister's attitude toward the Land for Wildlife program. That is a program under which the government works with private landholders to engage them in conservation. The minister has said that he believes it is reasonable that three and a half full-time equivalent positions in the regions that were working on Land for Wildlife have been lost, because he wants to focus on those areas that are in the formal conservation estate. I could use other examples, such as the management of dieback or the management of invasive weed species. The minister is missing the point that if we are to get a decent outcome, we need to work across all land tenures. There is some hope in this legislation—I will come to the issue of regional parks in a bit more detail in a moment—because it does provide the capacity to manage across different tenures. However, the message I am getting is that there is a demise in the resourcing that is going into programs such as Land for Wildlife.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife's covenanting program was a very successful program because it was noted on the certificate of title that a covenant had been placed on the land in order to protect its natural values. The former natural heritage trust also had a covenanting program. I understand that there are also provisions under the Soil and Land Conservation Act for a covenanting program. People would choose the particular covenant that suited them best. Developers and people who were told to put a covenant on land to protect some bushland as some form of environmental offset were inclined to choose, more often than not, a covenant under the Soil and Land Conservation Act. Others found that the DPaW covenant was the one that suited them best. It was often the case that private property owners chose the natural heritage trust covenanting program. Either way, it ensures a better degree of protection over the land because it is noted on the certificate of title. It was interesting that when the minister first responded to my questions about Land for Wildlife, he was clearly confused about what Land for Wildlife does and what covenants do, because he wanted to explain to people on his own side what Land for Wildlife did, and he said it was, effectively, a means of placing a formal conservation arrangement on land. The minister actually had another term for it; I cannot recall what it was. The minister did not get the fact that there is nothing binding about Land for Wildlife at all. In fact, probably the best way to describe it would be to say that it is almost a club of private landholders who are passionate about conserving part of their property or all of their property for conservation purposes. They have a brilliant newsletter called "Western Wildlife", which gives them the latest information, and they have a means by which they can network and share information. These people are mostly in the regions, and this enables them to get the support that they need and to detect what is happening on their property and interpret things.

I recall, having been a member of the Land for Wildlife program, that Penny Hussey, who I believe is retiring in a few days, came to our property, and she was able to show me a possum highway that was going up a jarrah tree. I had not realised that the tracks on that tree indicated that possums were using it in a particular way. Another way in which people can identify the animals that they have on their property is by looking at the tracks and scats. I think Penny was instrumental in getting out a book on that very point. It is fascinating and enriching, and a great way of ensuring that in the community we have a growing knowledge base. We have to bear in mind that the reason so much of our natural heritage is currently under threat is that we do not have a good understanding of our natural heritage. In fact, we could go into some classrooms and we would probably find that the students have a better understanding of the animals of the African savannah than they have of the animals in our own Darling Range or Great Western Woodlands. That is not good enough. We have a job to do. If we do not do that job and understand our natural heritage, the risk is that our natural heritage will be severely diminished or even lost.

The broader community outrage about some damaging process is not in itself strong enough to ward off that damaging process or to encourage or force government to deal with a problem. To use the example of dieback, how much community outrage is there about that biological bulldozer? There is hardly any outrage, because there is a high degree of ignorance about dieback, and before we know it the damage will have been done and vast tracts of land will have been lost, and then we will say, "It's a shame that has gone", when we did not even know what was there. It is a bit like what happened when we were clearing one million acres a year in the wheatbelt. We did not know about the floristic diversity that was there, and we just went ahead and did it because we had this imperative to open up the state in this way and we were blind to the other values of that area.

The work of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia in pulling together the conservation values of the whole state is clearly identified. However, I have to say that from my reading of the website of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, I do not think it is as explicit about its mission as it should be. That is clearly something that will need to be re-articulated when the two bodies merge. Labor proposed a merger of those two bodies as well. We are all in agreement on this point. However, there is something concerning about the narrowing of perspective. That is probably something that the minister himself can resolve. If the minister takes

the view that his agencies are to work only on the conservation estate, that is the position that we will see with the budget, as was revealed through that discussion about Land for Wildlife, and that is what will happen. However, if the minister takes the correct view that the soon-to-be-formed Conservation and Parks Commission has responsibility for conservation right across the state, there is some hope. But I would have preferred to have seen this body named the biodiversity conservation commission. That would have really ensured that its mission was about protecting the state's biological diversity, just as the Conservation Commission of Western Australia had before it. I am worried that we may go from the strong position we have at the moment, with the Conservation Commission being responsible for the whole of the state's biological diversity, to a much narrower position and the Conservation and Parks Commission will be interested only in particular areas. About eight per cent of the surface area of the state is now in the formal conservation estate. That figure may be higher. The minister might correct me on this: the percentage depends whether we look at the International Union for Conservation of Nature categories I to IV.

While I am talking about the Conservation Commission, the commission has involved some fabulous people. John Bailey is a previous chair of the Conservation Commission. He did some outstanding policy work. He worked through the Gallop government's cessation of old-growth forest logging and was involved in the creation of new national parks and the defining of areas of high conservation value. He did an outstanding job. He was supported by people within the department. I am trying to think what the Department of Parks and Wildlife used to be called. There was the Department of Conservation and Land Management and, at one stage, the Department of Environment, Water and Catchment Protection. What was it called after DEWCAP? Eventually it was the Department of Environment and Conservation, but it is a bit disturbing to see how many name changes and restructures the agency has had over the last 15 years. That is an issue. It means that people constantly have to deal with a changing organisational structure. That is destabilising and I do not think it is a way to achieve best possible outcomes.

I will try to get to a number of other areas as I proceed through this. I want to turn now to the capacities of our regional parks to bring people together in a way that enables them to understand the objectives for an area, what the opportunities are, and to appreciate the defining characteristics. When I think of a regional park area that is under incredible threat at the moment, I think of Beeliar Regional Park. There is a plan to build the Roe Highway stage 8 extension through it. That project suddenly has the financial backing of the federal government. We heard the Minister for Transport try to account for how the project would be of any use to Fremantle port, all of which I found totally unconvincing, to put it mildly. I will leave it to the member for Fremantle to discuss this point in greater detail. Beeliar Regional Park, including its wetlands, is an exceptional area. The wetlands provide an amenity. It is used by the community for passive recreation. Whether walking the dog around or holding family barbecues, that area is so precious to people. Its conservation values are also very high. It is a noted Carnaby's black-cockatoo flyway. People often see Carnaby's black-cockatoos nesting and feeding in the area. It is a very important area. It can be managed in a way that is totally non-conflicting so long as it has the right overarching framework. It is an example of a regional park that has enormous potential. We will go into consideration in detail about this when we eventually get to that stage.

This bill enables the drawing up of management plans that the Conservation and Parks Commission would be responsible for. That is the limit of it. It will not mean that the Conservation and Parks Commission has authority over the land—certainly not over privately owned land that would be included in the regional park area—but it would enable the CPC to ensure there was some reasonable coordination of effort. Perhaps there might be a program to eradicate veldt grass in Beeliar Regional Park. That would be done across the various land tenures, but I gather there would not be any compulsion on a private landholder should that private landholder not wish to be involved in the eradication of a weed species. I am talking about the sort of weed that could cause the fires that we so often see around Perth's suburbs. We have to keep stating in this place that while Western Australia has a very fire-prone natural environment, it is made many times more fire-prone because of its weed species. That is something we need to really look at. So much good, proactive fire control and effort could go into things like weed control and we would not have big flare-ups on 40-degree summer days. We could avoid it by making sure that we look after good, healthy bushland. It would also dramatically reduce the number of fires that we have, especially in areas that could be defined as the bushland urban interface. If those areas are properly managed, and effort and resourcing is put into good weed management, the whole area would be much safer.

The sorts of elements that one would expect to see in these regional park plans are the things that the CPC would be recommending and overseeing. There is potential for us to be disappointed when it comes to decisions that might be made by some private landholders. I note there is some reference in the legislation to which bodies would be deemed responsible—the term in the bill is “person responsible”—for eligible land. There are various definitions in the bill. The Land Administration Minister and other bodies would be involved, including lessees of land and the owners of land. That is all fine but we need to ensure that this body has the capacity to bring people together, even if they are not initially as enthusiastic as they might be about the overall plan for the regional park.

This brings me back to the composition of the Conservation and Parks Commission. I have highlighted that some excellent people have been on the Conservation Commission, including John Bailey and Graeme Rundle. It has also had people with great expertise in tourism, such as Pat Barblett, AM, and Eric Streitberg, who headed the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. People such as Professor Diana Walker and Dr Tom Hatton have also been on the MPRA. We have had some outstanding people on those bodies. We want to be sure the composition is right so that the right types of management plans are developed. I am concerned about having the right amount of marine expertise on the CPC, bearing in mind that two bodies are collapsing into one. We need to ensure that marine expertise is especially present. That is an issue we can delve into further when we get into consideration in detail.

I now want to turn to some other issues around regional parks. An event was hosted in Perth by the Urban Bushland Council WA Inc titled the Bush Forever Report Card Conference. A very respected officer at the Department of Parks and Wildlife, David Mitchell, noted in his presentation the importance of regional park management for looking after many Bush Forever sites. Mr Mitchell said that the Department of Environment and Conservation is now involved in the management of 120 sites or part-sites totalling 39 525 hectares. He was talking about land that is included in Bush Forever sites and the management of regional parks. Again, that figure could have increased since the conference took place a couple of years ago in December 2012. I note that the Minister for Planning was the keynote speaker and he gave the official opening address.

Sticking with Mr Mitchell's comments, in the report he states —

After DEC, The Western Australian Planning Commission is the manager of the next largest area of Bush Forever sites, owning over 16,000 ha including over 5,000 ha of regional park areas that are managed by DEC on behalf of the WAPC.

Importantly, we have the capacity not just to manage these areas as isolated blocks, but in the context of them being a component of a regional park. I think this legislation will give us the power to bring that into effect and it is a positive step forward that will make quite a difference. Mr Mitchell also notes in the report that the Urban Nature program at DEC is about bringing together a host of landholders, private landholders, bushland managers and local governments. Emphasis on the need to have private landholders involved is there. I think the minister has made a mistake by taking the view that the agency's activity should focus on work on land in the conservation estate and make that its only priority.

I turn to a person who I think members should recognise as a great contributor to knowledge about biodiversity values in Western Australia, particularly in the Perth region, and that is Greg Keighery. He is an eminent botanist, as is his wife Bronwyn. Their studies about the floristic values of the Swan coastal plain are outstanding. Greg has done some amazing work in the wheatbelt, and I am sure in many other places as well. His article in the report states —

Australian is recognised as one of the World's 12 megadiverse countries with an exceptionally rich biota and extremely high endemism. The southwest of Western Australia, with over 5,000 species of flowering plants of which 80% of species are endemic, is recognised as one of 35 megadiverse regions internationally ... Western Australian plants make a major contribution to Australia's international recognition. Perth itself, with over 1,300 native species, is the only capital city set within a biodiversity hotspot for native flora ... yet this still not well known or acknowledged both locally or nationally, compared with the other similar city, Cape Town ...

In the article Greg recognises there is a problem that there is no knowledge level in the broader community about the significance of our biodiversity values, which are right on our doorstep. The Minister for Planning somewhat acknowledged it in his speech when he talked about the significance of biodiversity. He also talked about the strategic assessment going on and that public comment on the strategic assessment would be invited. He said he had an ongoing commitment to that strategic assessment, although we are yet to see that. I believe there is a briefing as we speak at the Urban Bushland Council WA's offices in West Perth. Unfortunately, we are unable to attend. The significance of regional parks being able to develop management plans is a very important feature of this legislation.

I want to turn to the vesting process issue that I raised when I quoted Peter Robertson. The required vesting process will go beyond the current state of play that gives Aboriginal groups and traditional owners the right to manage their land. That legislation went through this place in recent years and it allows joint management of an area. That was a very positive step forward, but let us now give Aboriginal groups real ownership of that land. This is a measure that everyone supports as well. Peter Robertson raised concerns about the process and how long it will take and that there are no time lines here at all. The legislation would have to go through as part of the Land Administration Act, which could take any amount of time, and we could find ourselves in a perpetual loop in which a promise is made but not delivered. I am concerned about that, but it is a good initiative; we just need the time frames. A letter from Peter Robertson states —

The Bill is based on a two stage vesting process ... first under the Land Admin Act to the Conservation Commission and then **subsequently** jointly vested in an Indigenous body under the CALM Act.

There are concerns about how long that process could take. Perhaps the minister can address that in his second reading reply or perhaps during the consideration in detail stage.

I turn to an issue that is important to marine parks. We know the government is keen to talk about its enthusiasm for marine parks and it is something we support, but I think the Western Australian public needs to know that marine parks are nothing if they do not have significant percentages of hectares that are no-take areas. If we do not have that, we really have just lines on a map. That is not good enough; we need far more than simple lines on maps. The former Minister for Fisheries Troy Buswell raised this point when he said that he quite liked marine parks but he did not know what they do. I think that was because he had not been briefed on the intention and real purpose of marine parks. He was speaking from a position of half knowledge.

Mr A.P. Jacob: I sent him a book after that.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Good.

The minister will understand that a marine park has to have a sanctuary area within it. Ningaloo Marine Park has a 34 per cent no-take area sanctuary zone and that sets the standard. I think the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is 33 per cent. There are other percentages depending on the park's location, but of course it is not just about a percentage; it is about ensuring the nursery zones link with the areas where the demersal fish live or the pelagic fish move through. There has to be a range of interconnected habitats in a marine park so there are successful sanctuary zones and there can be that breeding up, which leads to better fishing outside the sanctuary zones. We saw that as well at Ningaloo; I remember the 2005 election highlighted that issue. One of Geoff Gallop's main environmental positions in 2005 was a commitment to Ningaloo Marine Park and making a major percentage of that a sanctuary zone. At the time people said that 34 per cent was too much and it would stop them from being able to go fishing. Now the sanctuary zone is in place I do not hear any complaints at all. That could be checked with the member for North West Central, but I think it would be found that there is in fact real support for the sanctuary zones within that marine park and the recognition that it is a good way of ensuring that habitat is protected to enable the replacement of the area's fish stocks. That is an important feature of marine parks that we have to have. The specifics in this legislation are very important. I understand that an attempt was made to define an area in a marine park where a particular type of fishing was permitted. That was challenged and it was said that people are either allowed to fish there using lines, nets, a purse seine or whatever type of fishing people want, or they are not allowed to. I understand this amendment will allow a particular type of activity to be defined, so it might be that only spearfishing, line fishing or something of that nature is allowed within a particular area, but other types are not. That is good. It means that we are able to put that into legislation. I think that was actually the intention before; we had always thought that capacity was there, but once it received a legal challenge, it was found that those subtle specific powers to define a place as being suitable for one form of activity but not for another were not there.

The bill contains a range of useful things. I look forward to exploring with the minister the nature of changes to excisions from state forests. Often excisions from state forests have come through this place that seem relatively minor and we wonder whether it really needs to occupy the time of this and the other place. If the excision is very small in nature, perhaps there is good reason for a more expedited system to be developed, but I think it is useful to have that oversight, and perhaps it needs to be explored whether those changes to the provisions relating to state forests will give us some degree of call-in power should we be fearful that what is about to be lost is significant habitat of some sort. That is an important issue as well.

I said I wanted to commend the minister on a particular point and that is the decision he was able to make about recreational shooting in the conservation estate and other public lands. I am very pleased the minister picked up on the position we put and he was able to withstand any challenges from recreational shooters on that issue. However, I was concerned to learn that on the day the minister made the announcement an agreement was entered into with the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia WA about its lease over 390-odd hectares of land in state forest 65, the Wanneroo shooting complex. I think the association is paying \$1 800 per year for nearly 400 hectares of land and it strikes me that that is very, very cheap rent. Of course, it is a community organisation, so perhaps the minister's view is that he wants to support it in some way, but I was concerned. I have some photos of the area—I have not been at that shooting complex—and from what I see there is quite a bit of integrated land there and there is certainly nothing in the lease about a serious rehabilitation plan for that land. Perhaps they will do that anyway. The way the lease is written is also bit concerning. In one part of the lease it states that the lease is for 11 years, but in fact I think it goes for 18 or 19 years.

Mr A.P. Jacob: It is a 19-year lease.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is a 19-year lease. It is not a good look when, on the one hand, the government is giving the group some bad news, that it is not getting its wished-for access to a whole lot of public land, while on the other hand the government does a deal with it on something like that. It looks a bit like the government is trying to strike a deal with it. Maybe that was what the minister had to do to get things through; I am not sure. Overall, I think the government has made the right decision that will benefit Western Australians. We will be able to market our tourism assets. Our greatest asset is our Indigenous heritage. Nowhere else in the world is there an Indigenous heritage like ours; it is one of the most magnificent things. Our other great asset is our natural heritage. People can talk about our mineral wealth, our sporting culture and all sorts of other things, but to me those two assets are truly unique to Western Australia. To be able to say that our conservation estate and our public lands are free from recreational shooting will be a good thing. I know that the department will at times use shooters to help control feral and invasive species. That is a good thing and it has to be done, but it is not the most effective way of controlling invasive species. Shooters can be called in from time to time when there is a particular job to be done, but they should not be the backbone of such a program at all.

I could go on a lot more about that, but I want to get to a couple of other issues, beginning with fire. The amendments in this bill provide for the director general of the Department of Parks and Wildlife to be responsible for fire management. That is a very interesting issue, and I understand that the director general would also be responsible for the negative impacts on biodiversity, but he is also responsible for the negative threat to human settlements and indeed human life. I recall having this conversation with Keiran McNamara many years ago. He put it to me that he felt that responsibility intensely, so I suppose with this legislative change we are just formalising the responsibility that a director general has for community safety and fire.

I will quickly touch on the answer that I have just received to question on notice 4062. It has given me some excellent information, and I really thank the people at the Department of Parks and Wildlife who produced this. I asked for historical records held by the department showing the burn history of the area that was covered by the Northcliffe fires. Unfortunately, in a debating chamber it is difficult to show this map. Perhaps I can seek the permission from the Acting Speaker to lay this on the table for the rest of the day.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): You can lay that on the table for the rest of today's sitting.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I will do that. Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: A study of this very clear piece of geographic information systems work from the Department of Parks and Wildlife's fire management services branch is fascinating, because it shows that much of area that was covered by the Northcliffe fires was holding a fuel age of zero to 10 years. In other words, there had been a fire there within the last 10 years. I am sure the geographic information systems people at the department would be able to tell us very quickly, but my eyeball spatial analysis of this is that 50 per cent of the area covered by the Northcliffe burns had been burnt within the last zero to 10 years—at least 50 per cent—and then a smaller area would have been burnt in the last 11 to 15 years. A fair sized area—it could be as much as 30 per cent; it would not be more than that—had a fuel load of over 20 years. It makes us realise that there is so much more for us to know, understand and learn about fire management. I think that if we were to just take it that prescribed burns will solve everything, we would be doing ourselves a great disservice. There is so much more work to be done in that area but I do support the idea of the director general taking this as one of his key responsibilities. In the time that remains in this day's sitting, I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Dr K.D. Hames (Minister for Health)**.

House adjourned at 5.20 pm
