

CANNING RIVER REGIONAL PARK

Grievance

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [9.43 am]: I thought there was another opposition member to go!

My grievance is to the Minister for Planning; Lands.

Mr J.N. Carey: You've already whinged!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I thank the minister for taking this grievance. The Canning River is an important element of my electorate. It has a long history. Indigenous people settled and exercised themselves in the area, which was marshland before white settlement. After white settlement, it was drained and became farming land. It was impacted by the Fremantle Harbour because of salt ingress and the Kent Street Weir was built to prevent salt going into the Canning River, but now it is a suburban area surrounded by hardworking Western Australians.

Canning River Regional Park is also an important element of the area. It is a great community facility. Interestingly, the Court Liberal government wanted to build a freeway through the park, but the local residents resisted it and put a stop to that. Now community groups like South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare, the Canning River Regional Park Volunteers and the Wilson Wetlands Action Group have made the park into something very special. The Canning River continues from the City of Canning to the City of Gosnells. Canning River Regional Park, which is on the City of Canning's side, becomes Hester Park on the Gosnells side of Nicholson Road. Unfortunately, Hester Park is not of the same standard as Canning River Regional Park. I know that with proper management and a proper vision, Hester Park can become as vibrant and just as welcoming an environment as Canning River Regional Park. That would be a major achievement for the people of my community and the whole eastern suburbs because Canning River Regional Park, which is already the Kings Park of the east, could be nearly doubled in size.

Clearly, the solution is for the City of Gosnells and the Western Australian Planning Commission to work together to make the most of the area. I was very pleased at the last election to support the City of Gosnells with a contribution from the state government that it used to build a pump track to increase the use of the park. It is unfortunate that sometimes the park attracts unwelcome attention and some antisocial behaviour, which clearly reduces the benefit that the community can get from the park. One of the ways that could be done is to create hundreds of affordable blocks in the part of the park that runs along Nicholson Road and is marked with existing residences. Affordable blocks could be created that would increase the land supply in the local area and take advantage of the excellent facilities, like Brookman Primary School, which is an award-winning primary school. It has won the Governor's School STEM Awards three times and cannot compete in that competition anymore because it has been too successful!

Hester Park is just around the corner from the Westfield Carousel Shopping Centre, which is Western Australia's largest and second-busiest shopping centre, and hundreds of millions of dollars has been invested in upgrading the rail line to remove the level crossing. The residents could take advantage of the existing infrastructure and the land sales could support the redevelopment of the park. Exactly the same standard could be achieved for Hester Park as was achieved for Canning River Regional Park if the Planning Commission and the City of Gosnells come together with the local community groups to set a vision for the park. It took 20 years to get that park to the standard it is at now by working together with the local government, the state government and the hardworking local volunteers. One need only look at the work SERCUL has been doing over the last 10 years. I have been very pleased to facilitate state government support for some of SERCUL's work on the Beckenham side of the park on the north-eastern side of the river. SERCUL has made huge improvements by working with the volunteers and state and local governments.

This is a real opportunity for the people of my community to take advantage of this huge piece of land by allowing some more residents into the local area. I know that the community would welcome additional residents. This proposal would allow for the creation of affordable land close to the city to take advantage of the existing investments that the private sector and the government is making in the community. At the same time, it would provide an opportunity to lift the standards of Hester Park so that we could finally overcome some of the problems we have seen in the past, including some of the antisocial behaviour, and also unlock the huge opportunity along the banks of Canning River. I have not personally taken advantage of the canoeing opportunities there, but I know the member for Gosnells has, as have others. I am told how good that area is. I have walked through the Canning River Regional Park with my kids when they were younger, and I look forward to doing the same with my grandkids at the right time. Members can see how this could provide an opportunity for the Western Australian Planning Commission, the state government, the City of Gosnells, local environment groups and the local community to work together to provide a vision for this park and create some additional affordable housing. I think this is an enormous opportunity for a win-win benefit for everyone.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Planning) [9.50 am]: I want to thank the member for Cannington for his grievance. When was the last time the member did a grievance? A long time ago?

Mr W.J. Johnston: A long time ago—eight years ago!

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes, I am sure—with a Liberal minister!

Can I first of all say how refreshing it is—not refreshing for a Labor member, but I will get to my point—for a local member to advocate for more housing in their electorate. What a stark contrast that is with the bunch of NIMBYs on the other side, who oppose density and housing at every opportunity. How refreshing. The member for Cannington is strongly advocating for greater affordable housing, recognising the benefits for the local community. We have to look at members on the other side, who oppose social housing, density, infill and anything else, particularly in an environment in which we need housing. I thank the member for Cannington for his proactive and positive advocacy for his electorate, particularly on this matter.

I am pleased to advise the member about Hester Park. In the member's advocacy there is a recognition that we can do more with Hester Park and that it has significant opportunities. The revitalisation of Hester Park remains a goal for the local member, the state government and the City of Gosnells. I am very pleased to advise the member that the Western Australian Planning Commission and the City of Gosnells are working together to advance the Hester Park revitalisation project. As the member identified, the revitalisation of Hester Park will ultimately deliver great amenity for the local community. That is what we want to see. A better park and a better precinct will mean better outcomes for residents in that area.

Of course, we have to make sure that the planning is right. I understand that the City of Gosnells is undertaking further planning work to rezone the land through an amendment to the metropolitan region scheme. For non-planning nerds in the chamber, there has to be rezoning of part of that land under the MRS. Once the additional work has been completed by the City of Gosnells, the Western Australian Planning Commission will consider initiating a formal amendment to the MRS to rezone the land. As the member knows, should that amendment be initiated, it will include community consultation, but it will mark a critical step towards boosting housing supply and improving amenity.

This demonstrates how our government is working with a range of great local members and local councils to renew existing precincts, unlock lazy government land and boost housing supply. The member is right that creating new affordable housing lots has plenty of benefits. More people living in an area should not be feared. In fact, more people living in an area can mean greater safety, greater street surveillance and more activation. It will uplift and create incredible opportunities for the precinct. As the member has rightly indicated, getting those additional affordable lots in that area will bring benefits to Hester Park. I think we should see this as an opportunity for incredible renewal, recognising that perhaps, for whatever reasons, Hester Park has missed out on some of the love. This represents a real opportunity to drive that incredible renewal, as advocated for very strongly by the local member.

As part of a broader picture, this government is doing everything it can to unlock lazy land, including as part of our housing diversity pipeline, to boost housing supply. We are using underused government land and seeking innovative proposals, whether they are from local government or not-for-profits. Sometimes these proposals are complex and involve rezoning, de-constraining land or headwork costs or a proposal might require significant negotiations with a community housing provider or some sort of other consortium. However, as we have seen this week, our use of lazy land is paying off with the announcement of 219 apartments at Pier Street. That builds on the use of lazy land at Stirling Street.

Coming back to this proposal, I thank the member again for his strong advocacy. He is absolutely right: the land represents a fantastic opportunity for affordable housing. It will help to boost housing supply, lead to the renewal of that precinct for those local residents and revitalise Hester Park.