

Colin Barnett's Residents' Newsletter

Member for Cottesloe

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The Heritage Debate Continues

The issue of heritage listings on private homes is probably the most contentious issue in the Western Suburbs. Hundreds of people have taken exception to their properties being listed on municipal inventories.

The recent landmark decision by the Town Planning Appeals Tribunal regarding a property in Cottesloe has also added fuel to the fire by throwing into doubt the meaning of municipal listings.

The issue can be traced back to the Heritage Act of Western Australia (1990), which created the concept of a municipal inventory.

Basically, a municipal inventory is a list of places and structures which, in the opinion of the local council, are or may become of cultural heritage significance.

Local governments are required under section 45 of the Heritage Act of Western Australia (1990) to prepare such a list and to review it every four years.

Places entered on a municipal inventory do not have legal protection, unless they are linked to the town-planning scheme or are already entered on the state register.

There is nothing in the 1990 Act that requires the municipal inventory to be linked to the town planning scheme however it has become the practice of local councils to do so.

It would seem that this link to the town-planning scheme is at the root of much of the community angst.

The controversy arises largely over the number of houses that have been listed, the selection criteria, the process involved and the consequences, real or perceived, for those whose homes have been listed.

There is no doubt that heritage preservation, in the broad sense, is well supported by the community. The reality is that most old homes are preserved by people who enjoy that style and lovingly maintain them of their own free will.

This is about people's homes and in most cases their biggest asset or investment. There is a sense in the community that people are losing control of their home and lives through municipal listings.

There needs to be a clear distinction between a number of other agendas that appear to be operating under the banner of heritage preservation, namely streetscape preservation and infill.

The complex relationship and interplay between these agendas has only added to the confusion surrounding the debate on heritage listings.

There is a need to review the Heritage Act of Western Australia (1990), and clearly determine what role, if any, local councils should play.



Editorial

In this issue of my newsletter I have ventured beyond purely local issues - not that there is any shortage of such issues, with the cut in train services to Loch and Grant Street stations; the raging heritage debate; delays to the underground power project; and undue political interference in the future of the Perry Lakes Stadium site.

However, there are some other state issues that I wish to draw to your attention.

Changes to industrial relations laws will mean extra costs to local businesses, as they face up to double wages for after hours, weekends and public holidays. Hardest hit will be the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors. Inevitably there will be less casual and part-time work with students suffering the most.

The State Government's plan to decriminalise cannabis (marijuana) is ill conceived and wrong. Young parents in particular, must be aware of the dangers to their children. The prospect of 'tolerance' to backyard cultivation of cannabis plants is a serious threat to health and crime.

On these and local matters, please feel free to call my office for a chat.

POINTS OF ORDER

You may be aware that my Parliament House office publishes a weekly newsletter called 'Points of Order'. Distributed by email each Friday and posted on my website, it covers the political headlines of the week together with economic indicators and other matters of interest.

If you would like to receive a weekly copy free of charge, please send Nina an email at ncurtis@mp.wa.gov.au or check out my parliamentary website www.loop.wa.gov.au.

For those without Internet access, call into my office or phone Nina on 9383 1505 and she'll post you a copy.

Cheers

For residents in Claremont, Cottesloe, Floreat, Karrakatta, Mosman Park, Mount Claremont, North Fremantle, Peppermint Grove, Shenton Park, South City Beach, Swanbourne.

Delays In State Underground Power Program

Previous newsletters have kept the community informed about the Underground Power Project in the Western Suburbs and the significant improvements in streetscape resulting from this program.

Recent storms have also highlighted the advantages of undergrounding the power lines in terms of safety and reliability of power supplies.

Underground power, although expensive, has been enthusiastically supported by residents and their local councils.

It has been disappointing to see the program slowed down over the past twelve months as a result of State Government cutbacks.

Programs that should have been completed over six months ago have been drawn out and the removal of the existing lamp-posts has been delayed. Much of Stirling Highway still has the blight of the old trolley poles, which continue to dominate the streetscape between Bay Road and Dalkeith Road in Nedlands.

It now seems the earliest starting date of the two remaining round two projects in Nedlands and Mosman Park will be around mid 2003.



High Court Defeat For British Pensioners Living In Australia

Since 1993, as the Local Member, I have supported the cause of British born residents in their bid to get the UK government to change its pension payment system for British citizens living overseas.

It was disappointing therefore to see the outcome of a recent High Court appeal decision that effectively resulted in British citizens losing their battle to have their UK retirement pensions updated in line with inflation.

A judge rejected accusations that the government was unlawfully discriminating against tens of thousands of expatriates and said the decision was a political rather than a judicial decision.

The test case was closely watched by Australian officials and pensioners.

Government figures show that of 900,000 UK pensioners living abroad, about 420,000 living in certain countries receive up ratings while 480,000 others – including those living in South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand - are the victims of frozen pensions.

Rejecting the application for judicial review, the judge said the government had admitted its policy was illogical, with no consistent or coherent pattern, and was about cost saving.

While in the short term the status quo will prevail it is an issue that is not going to disappear and I will continue to support British born residents in their fight for pension equality.

Cannabis Law Changes – “Soft Drugs” Approach

Figures recently released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show that Western Australia has the highest use of cannabis in the nation.

This fact reinforces the argument that the government should not decriminalise the use of cannabis or allow for the limited cultivation of the drug.

The government’s position ignores the South Australian experience and the link between cannabis use and crime.

Armed home invasion rates doubled in South Australia following that state’s decriminalisation of cannabis cultivation.

The government’s drug law changes will give Western Australia the softest cannabis

laws in the country and are not in the interest of the community or our young people.

I strongly encourage parents of young children in particular to think carefully about the consequences of this proposed ‘soft drugs’ approach and the potential impact on the future well being of their children.

The most reasonable policy approach is not to decriminalise, but to educate and discourage.

If you would like more information on this topic please contact the Electorate Office.

Fremantle Eastern Bypass Removal And Consequences For The Western Suburbs

The Fremantle Eastern Bypass is part of a 30 year planning strategy to provide a freight transport solution for the Perth Metropolitan Region.

Over the past 10 years the port trade has grown from 100,000 to 350,000 containers per year and this has had a significant impact on areas that are already battling to cope with the traffic flow.

The Government’s intention to delete the bypass from the Metropolitan Region Scheme shows little or no thought for the negative consequences resulting from this action.

It will affect not only the southern suburbs but also the total road and planning strategy for Perth. The impact on the Western Suburbs, particularly Curtin Avenue, is of concern to me as the Local Member.

If the Eastern Bypass is not built, increasing container trade, including heavy-duty haulage, will be forced to move through

the Western Suburbs on its way to northern destinations.

Not only is this an incredibly poor planning decision but one that is fraught with danger. One only has to stand at any intersection along Curtin Avenue on weekday mornings and evenings to be horrified at the interplay between haulage trucks, motorists (many with children in the car on their way to and from school) cyclists and pedestrians all competing for space on a road system that is barely adequate for the current demand let alone any increase in volume.

It is essential that the Bypass be built if the ever-increasing needs of the freight transport industry are to be catered for in a safe and realistic way.

Reduction Of The Train Service To Loch And Grant Street Stations

My office has been inundated with telephone calls from concerned residents about the decision by Transperth to reduce the train services to Loch and Grant Street Railway Stations.

Little warning was given that trains would not stop at these stations after 7pm weeknights and not at all on weekends, as from 18th August 2002.

A variety of reasons were given for this decision, such as reducing travel time so that timetables could be met, lack of patronage and concerns for public safety, with the introduction of four carriage trains on the Perth – Fremantle line.

Most of these proved to be spurious arguments, with little attention paid to the

impact on residents in the immediate vicinity of these stations.

Many people use the trains after 7pm and on weekends. To expect passengers to alight at adjacent stations and walk significant distances along poorly lit and unsafe roads is unreasonable. For many elderly people and the disabled it is not an option, and for the younger passenger it is clearly a danger.

The loss of this railway service has had a detrimental effect on the lives of many

people and the adverse consequences of the decision have proven to be more far reaching than anticipated.

The recent announcement by the Government that Transperth would provide hourly services on weekends to both stations from October and half hourly shuttle bus services to adjacent stations on weekday evenings from mid September is not an acceptable outcome.

Upgrading of these stations to cater for four carriage trains by extending the platform or modifying carriages so that only central doors open makes more sense than reducing services.

As the Local Member I will continue to push for a full resumption of services to these stations.



Rous Head Boat Ramp

As the Member for Cottesloe, I have been contacted over a number of years by local boat owners about the lack of a boat ramp in the area. Studies undertaken by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure confirmed this need and gave it a high priority.

A boat launching facility with direct access to the ocean would resolve long standing safety concerns over the potential for conflict between larger commercial vessels using the inner harbour of Fremantle Port and recreational boats being launched in the Swan River and travelling to the ocean through the inner harbour.

While it would appear that there is little scope for providing such a facility in the existing Rous Head Harbour, Fremantle Port has commenced some further reclamation of land adjacent to the Rous Head Industrial Park and discussions have taken place with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure regarding the possible incorporation of a public boat launching facility within a new reclamation area nearby.

Such a facility is long overdue and the inherent safety issues call for a commitment to construction in the near future.

As a temporary measure, a ramp could be provided at Rous Head until such time as a larger development takes place. The initial ramp, which could well be in use for several years and need not be an all weather facility, could either be a Fremantle Port or a private project.

Student Tax

Since 1995 university students in Western Australia have had the choice of whether or not to join a student union.

In other Australian states students are forced to be members of the student union as a condition of enrolment.

Voluntary student unionism does not prevent anybody from joining or giving money to a student union, but merely ensures each individual student has the freedom to choose whether or not to become a member of the union.

The State Government intends to repeal the *Voluntary Membership of Guilds and*

Associations Act (1994) (WA) and introduce a compulsory 'amenities' fee to be paid by all university students in Western Australia.

The average compulsory student fee imposed by universities around Australia is \$264. This is a significant cost to students on a limited income.

I support a system of voluntary student unionism and the principle of user pays for services on campus. I would welcome your views.

Perry Lakes Stadium

Perry Lakes Stadium has passed its use by date and the Town of Cambridge, which owns the land, favours the redevelopment of the site.

The State Government seems to agree, but wants money from the land sales to fund new sporting facilities, including a new athletics stadium.

What is wrong with this is that the two issues should not be confused.

Any rezoning and redevelopment of the Perry Lakes site should be done on its own merits. There are obvious issues of public

open space, recreation and environmental; protection of the lakes.

The Town of Cambridge, on behalf of its ratepayers, should then determine the use of the money.

It is improper of the State Government to be pressuring the Town of Cambridge and to be placing conditions on a rezoning which should be allowed to follow due process.

Well Done! City After Dark Program

For two nights or so every week during term, Perth high school students are being deliberately escorted down dark city laneways, taken past groups of people who are affected by alcohol or street dwellers. What's more, the two adults escorting them through these experiences are police officers.

This innovative program, run by the community-policing group is proving to be a big hit with those students and staff who have undertaken it.

The City After Dark Program is a life skills tour around nightspots in Perth, aimed at educating and alerting young people about personal safety.

Some of the areas covered include the importance of positive body language, knowing your location at all times, safety features of transport options and the safety initiatives within the City, Northbridge and surrounding

suburbs.

The program, which started in the Western Suburbs, is run by Senior Constable Rebecca Benn and First Class Constable Nick Steel who have been highly praised for their efforts and understanding of working with youth on the issue of personal safety.

Acceptance of responsibility for personal safety is an important aspect of the fight against crime.

I strongly recommend, and fully support the extension of this program across the metropolitan area.



Stirling Highway – What Does The Future Hold?

Owners and developers of property along Stirling Highway have raised their concerns with me over future plans for the highway reserve.

Main Roads WA, together with the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and Local Councils, is currently reviewing the long term transport needs of Stirling Highway between Jarrad Street Cottesloe and Winthrop Avenue, Crawley, with a view to reducing the reserve.

The existing reserve is 80 metres wide and includes about 30 metres on each side of the 20 metre-wide highway.

Traffic studies indicate that there is likely to be little change in traffic volumes along Stirling Highway over the next 20 years. There is therefore no justification for maintaining the width of the existing reserve.

For many this review will provide a positive outcome in terms of their property being removed from the reserve and therefore no longer subject to possible resumption.

A number of residents, however, will continue to have a highway reserve over all or part of their property. This does not necessarily mean that their property will be resumed.

Any future changes to the highway should only be done with genuine consultation with residents.

If you have any concerns in relation to this matter please contact my Electorate Office on 9383 1505.

Ask Nina . . .



CONCESSIONS

Would you like to know what concessions are available to you? The 2002/2003 Guide to State Government Concessions provides details of concessions available to families and individuals in Western Australia and is available on the web-site at www.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au or by phoning 9222 2833.

NEW SMALL BUSINESS HOTLINE – LET US KNOW YOUR CONCERNS!

Small business is the biggest employer in the state. Changes to industrial relations laws and recent increases in state taxes are just two areas causing problems.

I am interested in your ideas to help small business and keen to hear from as many local businesses as possible.

A small business hotline has been made available – so ring us on 1300 888 232 or contact me at the Electorate Office to make an appointment.

BUSH TO BEACH TRAIL WALK

It was a dedicated team of people who braved the wet weather and turned up to participate in a walk organised by the Friends of Underwood Ave and the Friends of Shenton Bushland to promote an urban bush trail through green corridors and bushland with the ultimate goal of linking Kings Park and Bold Park to the sea.

The walk launched a 6km section of this trail, which started at Grace Vaughan House near Shenton Station, passed through Shenton Bushland and Underwood Ave Bushland before ending at Perry Lakes, where all those who wished to join in had a picnic.

Congratulations to all those who worked towards this concept and participated in the walk, which is seen as an important initiative to promote the greenway between the two larger parks and the sea and raise awareness of the significant social and eco tourism potential of a bush corridor.

For anyone who is interested in undertaking this walk a copy of the trail is available from my Electorate Office on 9383 1505. Ask Nina to send you a copy.

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