



Colin Barnett

Member for Cottesloe

LATE
2005

Newsletter

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Local government under siege

There is rarely a moment when one or more controversies aren't raging in local government circles. Perhaps this is just democracy at work. Or perhaps there are some more fundamental issues.

For a start, there are 144 local authorities in the state – 114 in the country and 30 in the metropolitan area.

In the days of 'roads boards', this may have made sense. It does not make sense today. The reality is that in country areas experiencing falling populations and hard times, a number of local authorities are simply not viable.

In the city, growing population and rising property prices keep the 'financials' in reasonable shape. But for the smaller councils there is an ever-increasing burden of complying with accountability and legislative requirements. At the same time, councils themselves are getting involved in a wider range of activities.

In the western suburbs, our local councils must feel under siege. The State Government is moving to take control of key planning issues and the Commonwealth seems to think it knows best on coastal development.

To me, local planning and development issues are best handled at the local level. This means local planning schemes need to be up to date and consistent with wider metropolitan planning. If the local scheme falls behind, as in Cottesloe, problems arise.

Problems also come about when a project is out of the ordinary and of a scale and complexity which goes beyond purely local factors.

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Bay View Terrace Claremont will be part of the town centre redevelopment

A note from Colin

Welcome to this 'late 2005' issue of my newsletter – the first since the state election and bearing somewhat of a new look.

On that score, I very much thank the community for electing me for a 5th time as Member for Cottesloe. As the then Leader of the Opposition, I was obviously disappointed at not winning what was a tough contest. For the record, the Liberals did go from 26 MPs to 33 MPs – but that was not enough.

At the local level, issues of planning and redevelopment continue to dominate. Whatever the merits of any particular situation may be, I have never experienced such a period of open hostility between a state government and local councils. My role is to find the 'common ground' and to help achieve a fair result for all.

Several constituents have contacted me to express their frustration over access to broadband. Some services have been improved, but there is obviously more to be done. Your feedback will help me to better present the case.

On a wider front, I welcome your views on some of the important and often contentious issues we face. Water supply, Telstra, outcomes-based education, taxation and industrial relations are some examples.

In this newsletter, and on my website, I have raised the issue of uranium mining and nuclear energy. You might like to have your say.

Please feel welcome to phone, email or drop into my office on matters that concern you.

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

Where's broadband?

Telstra is now certain to be fully privatised after legislation enabling the sale passed through federal parliament.

The sale has quite rightly been focused on availability, reliability and cost of services. Although, not much thought has been given to long suffering Telstra shareholders.

Most of the rumblings are from country areas. That is fair enough. No one would begrudge better phone and communications services for the bush.

But what about the city? And more to the point, what about our local suburbs?

Access to quality broadband is proving as much of an issue in the western suburbs of Perth as it is in remote areas of the country.

A number of local businesses (many home-based), and residents have contacted my office complaining about the capacity

of their broadband Internet connection.

Broadband is growing in popularity over 'dial up' because it offers high-speed internet access and it is 'always on'.

The problem in this electorate is that the old telephone exchanges and copper wiring were never intended for this level of technology. This is why so many people are finding their connection slow, unreliable or in some cases, unavailable.

I was able to take up the cause for sections of Mosman Park and Mount Claremont with some success, but I know that problems are more widespread.

While broadband is available in various forms and through a number

of providers, it is not all that easy to find out exactly what options are available in individual areas.

Please let me know what your situation is so we can better argue the case for improved services.

MosArts

MosArts (Mosman Park Arts Foundation) is doing a great job in promoting the performing and visual arts.

Starting with the restoration of the art deco Memorial Hall, and then the Camelot Outdoor Theatre, MosArts now runs a strong programme throughout the year.

I was delighted to present the inaugural Graham Emery Scholarship to Shane Adamczack to further his career.

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The Perry Lakes issue is a classic example. The proposed redevelopment has been caught up in the need for a new athletics stadium – something the state needs, but not something which is the responsibility of Cambridge ratepayers.

Rather than a complete takeover, it would be better for the state to have prime responsibility for the new sporting facilities on AK reserve, and for the Town of Cambridge (and residents) to have prime responsibility for redeveloping the old Perry Lakes site.

The redevelopment of the Claremont CBD is another example. Almost against the odds, Claremont Council has battled through – greater assistance at a state level would have been helpful. It would be a great pity at this late stage, if the opportunity is lost for residential accommodation to be part of the overall project.

Perhaps when a development like this is proposed, small councils with limited resources should be able to approach the State

Government for financial assistance and expertise with planning. This would ensure high quality, professional guidance through the process.

In other situations, local politics has become the issue. There is a trend toward councillors standing and being elected on a single-issue basis. I am not questioning the issues or the integrity of the individual councillors. What concerns me is that councils may find themselves locked into a fixed position without the 'give and take' that is needed to resolve the matter.

The future of the Cottesloe beachfront is an obvious example. The prospect is that the State

Government may simply take the matter out of the hands of the local council, and therefore of the local community. I do not want to see that happen.

My message is simple: support councillors and trust them to deal as best they are able, on local planning issues that are both complex and important to us all. There will be compromises, but that is the way of the world.

The alternative could well be the loss of an effective voice for local residents – the people most affected.

That would not be a good outcome for our local communities.



Cottesloe Beach Hotel - potential premium residential apartments, hotel/bar and cafe/restaurant

Liquor licensing - last orders please!

An independent committee set up by the state government to review Liquor Licensing in WA recently released its report for public comment.

It acknowledges that most people who consume alcohol act responsibly and have a good time without causing harm to themselves or anyone else.

I agree, as I am sure most people would.

I am also very much aware of the harm caused by excessive alcohol consumption that fuels anti-social crowd behaviour, road trauma, domestic violence and a range of long-term health problems. There is a real concern about the level of binge drinking amongst teenagers, particularly in the western suburbs.

For these reasons, we do need some level of regulation. The practical issue is of how much control, and how we find a fair balance between the different business outlets, patrons and local residents.

One thing is certain – times are changing. The public has moved on from the ‘great Australian swill’ to a more sophisticated and cosmopolitan lifestyle.

The review contains some 100 recommendations for changes to the Liquor Licensing Act. It also promotes a “move towards a restaurant/café culture which would encourage the consumption of alcohol in a more moderating climate.”

- Key recommendations include:
- Free water to be provided at licensed premises
 - Staff to be trained in responsible serving of alcohol
 - Hotel trading hours on a Sunday to be extended to midnight
 - A lockout condition be imposed on all nightclub licences prohibiting entry after 3:00am
 - Nightclubs being required to close by 5:00am
 - Liquor stores to be able to trade on Sundays from 10:00am to 10:00pm
 - Licensed restaurants be able to sell

liquor without a meal (with conditions)

- Making it to be an offence to serve liquor to a drunken person.

The nightclub industry has concerns about the lockout on clubs prohibiting entry after 3:00am, and restricted trading hours requiring them to close at 5:00am.

My view is that whatever regulation we have, it needs to move with the times.

What are your thoughts?

You can read the committee’s report at www.rgl.wa.gov.au



Relaxing over coffee at a local cafe

Nuclear - the future in power

Whatever one’s opinion on nuclear energy may be, the reality is that the horse has bolted.

There are already 31 nations with nuclear power plants. In the USA, 20% of electricity is nuclear. In the UK it is 24%. France is nearly 80% nuclear and Sweden is at 50%. The most populous nations, China and India, have major expansion programmes underway.

For me, nuclear energy offers great hope for improving living conditions and economic opportunity in the developing world.

For committed environmentalists this is something of a conundrum. Nuclear power is for now and the foreseeable future the only alternative

to fossil fuels for large-scale power generation. If we are going to be serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, then for most nations nuclear power is the only option.

Given our large reserves of natural gas, Australia doesn’t need to ‘go nuclear’ for at least 20 years, if not longer. Natural gas produces only half the greenhouse emissions of a coal power station.

Australia does, however, have the world’s largest reserves of uranium and is second only to Canada as a major producer. I see no logical reason for a ban on uranium mining

in this state.

For more information, please go to my website www.mp.wa.gov.au/colinbarnett where you will find the transcript of a speech I delivered recently at a forum on nuclear energy, held by the Conservation Council of Western Australia.

WELL DONE

Swanbourne Primary School, Claremont Yacht Club and East Claremont Primary School – all celebrating their 100th birthday.

Primary school planning

The Education Department has commenced a planning process for four local primary schools, known as the 'River Cell'.

These schools (Claremont, East Claremont, Dalkeith and Nedlands) all achieve excellent results and deserve their high reputation.

Understandably, any talk of 'planning' can spark fears of closures or amalgamations.

I urge parents and community members to keep an open mind and to look at what is best for students – both now and in the future.

There are many factors to consider. Nedlands is at capacity, while the other three schools have relatively small enrolments. There is also a trend for students to transfer to private schools at a younger age. For those schools, year 7 is likely to become the most common entry year.

Another factor is that each of the schools has only a small land area available – well below the 4 hectare standard for a new primary school.

	Student Numbers*	Land Area
Claremont Primary School	168	1.82
East Claremont Primary School	164	0.55
Nedlands Primary School	484	1.99
Dalkeith Primary School	259	1.53

*includes pre-primary through to Year 7

Existing school buildings also have important heritage value.

For busy parents, issues of kindergarten access and childcare come into the overall picture. And the central issue for everyone is the quality of learning and the curriculum offered.

As your MP, I have been asked to take part in this planning process. To do this effectively, I need your views and comments.

Foreshore protection

The Cottesloe electorate is unique in that most of the boundary is either river or ocean foreshore. The protection and rehabilitation of these areas is an ongoing task.

After concerted action by local residents, (and concerns voiced in this newsletter) the river foreshore at Northbank has been properly established. The City of Fremantle has done a good job.

In Mosman Park, the Council and the Swan River Trust have joined forces to repair the old retaining wall at 'The Coombe'.

And on the ocean side, I congratulate both the Nedlands and Cottesloe Councils for establishing new and safe stair access at Swanbourne and South Cottesloe respectively.

I live in hope of a pedestrian path from Peppermint Grove along the river through to Claremont.

On the topic of beaches, what do you think about restricted hours for dogs?

My view is that as long as owners take full responsibility for their dogs, the designated dog beaches should be available throughout the day.



The stairs at Swanbourne beach are good for the environment

Ask Nina . . .



Seniors' Card

If you've turned 60, you may be eligible for a Seniors' Card which offers a range of discounts on government and other services.

You will need to be a permanent resident of Western Australia and work 20 hours or less per week to be considered.

Call Nina for details.

British Pensioners

An unfortunate ruling by the United Kingdom's House of Lords Appeal Committee will continue to deny indexed pensions to nearly a quarter of a million UK pensioners living in Australia.

Nina has more information or go to www.britishpensions.org.au

Bold Park

A five-year management plan for Bold Park will look at ways to protect the bushland reserve as an important haven for biodiversity as well as a key educational and passive recreational facility.

Details of the plan are available on the Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority website www.bgpa.wa.gov.au or contact Nina.

New Look Website

Go online to my rejuvenated website www.mp.wa.gov.au/colinbarnett

My latest comments on a range of important issues can be downloaded along with useful local information.