



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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COASTAL PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—Lib) (12.50 p.m.): I rise to contribute to debate on the Coastal Protection and Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 because my electorate of Caloundra obviously contains a lot of wonderful coastline. It contains Pumicestone Passage, which is now a protected marine park under legislation. It is an area of rapid development. It is an area of many issues and some contention with a high level of tourism. We need to increase tourism and the tourism dollar. All of these things together make it an issue for local councils, state governments and federal governments. There should be cooperation and funding from all three levels of government to cope with environmental issues.

There has been a longstanding issue in relation to unexploded ordnances around the Currumbundi environmental park and up the coast. I do not regard this as just an issue for the state government, and I said that to the councillor who came to see me. Over time this is an issue that local, state and federal governments have not come to terms with. The whole three levels of government should be involved. Local government has given planning rights for development over some of these areas. The federal government has the primary role under its Defence Department, because during the Second World War the Army set up camps along the seafront and left a lot of ammunition in the ground. Although it cleared up a lot of it—and I have investigated this quite a deal—much of it was buried under the sand for various reasons. The state government has also not been proactive in this regard.

There is a bit of buck-passing going on in the Sunshine Coast area about this issue. If we are to protect our citizens, the three tiers of government should get together and cooperate. I ask the minister to consider that. I do not think the state government can just say, 'It's nothing to do with us.' The primary responsibility lies with the federal government but it also involves local government, because, as I said, it allowed development plans to proceed and developments to go ahead on this land. The state government is involved under environment protection, because a lot of it is beachfront and dunal land which comes under what used to be the EPA or BPA. These are very important issues that need to be looked at.

There are a number of bodies on the Sunshine Coast in my electorate who do a lot of good work to bring environmental issues, coastal protection issues and the management thereof to the attention of the community, and I will go through those in a moment. However, I have to say that this coastal protection management legislation being heralded by Labor members as a great triumph for the Labor Party—and I am pleased it has come in, although I do have a couple of reservations that I will discuss with the minister—began under the previous coalition government. In fact, I launched the first Pumicestone Passage management control plan on the Pumicestone Passage in the electorate of Caloundra after travelling from Bribie on a boat through that wonderful passage. If anyone has not travelled that passage I suggest they do, and it needs to be done at high tide. When coming through that passage one can see the Glasshouse Mountains as they have never seen them before, as well as the abundant bird life.

Mr Wells: You can see them as Captain Cook saw them.

Mrs SHELDON: They can indeed see them as Captain Cook saw them. I have never understood why he called them the Glasshouse Mountains, however.

Mr Wells: It was after the glasshouse in the Kew Gardens, which were very new at that time. They shone in the sun so he thought they looked like glasshouses.

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, I have heard that before, Minister, but I have never been able to look at those mountains as being made of glass. They look quite substantial. They are very interesting in design. I have actually flown over that area in a small aircraft. Of course, they are remnants of a very old volcano. If one flies over them on a clear day, as it was the day I flew over them, one can see the ancient lava flows from that volcano that come down across the land—obviously that is mostly covered by forest—and sweep out into the bay near the northern tip of Moreton Island. That lava flow is still substantial on the base of the bay. It is quite an extraordinary thing to see. It is very ancient and something we should promote as a tourist attraction on the Sunshine Coast.

Ms Spence: When are you going to organise this boat trip for members?

Mrs SHELDON: Yes, I certainly will. If members on both sides of the House contact me I will happily organise it. I cannot say that I will pay for it all, because the government has all the money. But I will very happily organise it and I am sure the minister will foot the bill. After all, it is environmental protection and management.

Mr Wells: Dream on!

Mrs SHELDON: It would not cost much. It does not cost a lot for tours on the Sunshine Coast, Minister. It is not a very flash boat, but it is quite big with a flat bottom. I am sure someone like Judy Spence would knock up some scones so we could have morning tea, too.

Mr Cummins: Pumpkin scones.

Mrs SHELDON: I will provide the milk, sugar, jam and cream. That is fair enough.

Coastal protection and its management is vital. I am pleased to see that, under the Integrated Planning Act, which we introduced as a government in 1997, this bill covers many disparate pieces of legislation that had to be attended to separately by councils or people wishing to undertake planning and development in this area—not just this area of the Sunshine Coast but in this area in general.

National parks are an important part of my electorate. Since the last election my electorate now includes the northern part of Bribie Island. I have spoken to the minister about this and his office has got back to me with some information and will be getting back to me again, but I take that a step further today. As I have said before, there is great concern about the management of the northern end of Bribie Island. The information I have from the minister's department is that one head ranger and four other rangers are provided by the Parks and Wildlife Service on the whole of Bribie and that the Caboolture Shire Council funds two rangers for the southern end. The Caloundra City Council said it does not provide any rangers because it is owned and controlled by National Parks because it is a national park, and I am still looking into that a little further.

However, the result is that there are not many patrols or rangers to cover that area. I have asked the minister's office to supply me with information relating to where the bases for these rangers are and how often patrols go up there, because there are two major problems. One problem is natural erosion due to the narrowness of that island at that point. It has the ocean coming in on one side and the passage on the other. The changing tidal flows are eroding this area quite considerably. The other problem relates to four-wheel drives which access the northern tip. Some people do the right thing and only go on the beach when it is wet and hard; others go when the tide is in. That aggravates the coastal dunes. Also, a lot of illegal camping is going on there. Many boats pull in on the leeside of the island. There is no problem with boats doing that, provided that people do not dump refuse, walk on sensitive areas of dunes and generally do not look after the environment. I would like to have further conversations with the minister about this. I heard him in the House very generously providing extra rangers for certain areas of the state, so I will ask him to look at providing extra rangers for the northern end of Bribie.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mrs SHELDON: I pay tribute also to the Sunshine Coast Environmental Council, which over the years has done a lot of very good work in protecting our coastline and bringing environmental issues to the fore. It is very active in the community and I have worked well with it. Former minister Doug Slack also worked well with the council and was well regarded by it.

I mention also the Wildlife Preservation Society, of which I am a member and have been for many years. It is constantly vigilant in protecting wildlife and drawing attention to issues of wildlife protection to the community and local, state and federal governments. It should be congratulated on the work it does. It is a relatively small band of people, but a very able and dedicated band. They do a great job.

I pay a tribute to Kathleen Macarthur, who died this year and who was renowned for her fight to protect the bird life and other fauna and flora of the wetlands around Pumicestone Passage. She was a noted artist of wild flowers. Her work was beautiful. Most of her life was dedicated to protecting and

recording our environment. She was very outspoken on the subject of development, and particularly that on the seaward side of Kawana Waters. That area used to be beautiful heathlands with wonderful native flowers. The Christmas bells and flowering heath have all gone now. That is a great loss. It cannot be replaced. I know that development must go ahead, but surely some sections there could have been retained. The Currumundi Environmental Park is very small and, because it is very close to residential areas, there are often bushfires in the area, including one recently which devastated the park. At least that area is protected. The minister has agreed that it will be named the Kathleen Macarthur Environmental Park. I think it is fitting that a woman who devoted so much of her life to this cause be acknowledged in that way.

Sustainable development is a necessity in this area. In other words, there will be development, but it will be permitted to meet growing residential and tourism demand only if it takes into consideration the natural environment, which is why people wanted to go there in the first place. Accordingly, development plans and approvals are set with that notion in mind.

We have a very big development at the back of where I live. I am lucky enough to live on Pumicestone Passage, which is a lovely area. Pelican Waters now has a 27-hole Greg Norman-designed golf course. That development company has worked very hard to prove its environmental credentials. I was involved in the approval process for the golf course. The company was required, and prepared, to set up very large buffer zones along the areas contiguous to Bells Creek. The whole golf course has been designed with environmental concepts in mind. It is quite different from other courses and very challenging. Players are always aware of the natural environment because of the way in which the course has been designed. This will be a very big drawcard for international golfers. I know Greg Norman and Pelican Waters have international competitions in mind for that course. The fact that the course is environmentally friendly will attract people.

Importantly, there are a lot of migratory birds and grassbeds, some of which are diminishing, particularly with the algae bloom, which is a problem at times. Also, unfortunately, a lot of people like to use the passage, particularly on weekends. On a number of occasions in this House I have raised the issue of jet skis. Although I know that their control comes under the Department of Transport, I have also written to the Environment Minister about this. Thousands of people in the electorate signed petitions saying that they wanted jet skis banned. I note that jet skis are now banned on Sydney Harbour.

Although provisions have come in under the Transport Act such that jet skis should remain 80 metres from the beach and 60 metres from people in the water, that really is not sufficient. Although more people are now observing that rule—and I can tell honourable members that the residents ensure that they do—there is still a problem with people who do not show consideration for others. There has to be an environmental problem, given the bird life in these areas. I wonder whether anyone has done a count of the bird life in the area. A growing number of black swans can be found off the tip of Bells Creek. The other day I counted 25 in the water. Their numbers are growing. Obviously, the birds like the environment and are returning to nest on the mangroves. This is the sort of thing that we have to protect. Although I do not agree with locking up great sections of our state so as to prevent people accessing them—surely people should be able to access them—we have to be careful of people's pursuits in those areas. I ask the Minister for Environment to look further at the use of jet skis on Pumicestone Passage. They are noisy and generate pollution. I know that people enjoy riding jet skis, but there is no reason why people cannot go quietly down the passage and jet ski on the waves and not in a marine park like Pumicestone Passage. I know that the majority of people in the community feel exactly the same way.

Although in general I support what this bill is doing, I do have concerns about the question of compensation. I also would like the minister to cover these in some detail. On reading the bill, it would appear that compensation for certain quarrying, access and rights that people now have might not be paid if it is seen as being in the public interest for those rights—privileges, access, permits, licences and so on—to be taken away. I do not agree with that. We had an instance of this in Pumicestone Passage. The Goss Labor government looked at phasing out the trawling of Pumicestone Passage—a concept which I supported. However, it would not pay the fishermen compensation. That was the livelihood for a number of fishermen who trawled the passage. One licence was in a family for something like 70 years. When we were in government, I saw to it that those fishermen were compensated fairly and independently for the loss of their licence and livelihood. That is very important. As a government we should not be saying, 'We've got the power to take that land. We're going to take it. Too bad for you.' Where do people's rights come into play?

In relation to the CAMCOSS transport issue, which involves the laying of a railway line up the coast, we are daily battling with Transport to get compensation for people whose land and whose businesses in industrial estates would be affected. That train line most probably will not come into operation at the earliest until about 2011 or 2015. In the meantime, people will have this hanging over their head. They cannot sell or expand their businesses or homes. Where does the question of

compensation come in? We have hardship provisions that should be adhered to, because I do not think the might of the government arm should say, 'Well, too bad about the little person. The greater good for the greater community must be considered.' Yes, it does need to be considered but not by trampling on the rights of other people.

It is very important, if the Liberal Party is to support this bill, that in his reply the minister clearly identifies the question of compensation for people whose rights, be they mining or whatever, are being taken away under this bill. I am not saying that the bill should not have the power to resume these things if it is for the greater good, but the people who have the rights to them should be fairly and adequately compensated, otherwise it is not good legislation.

I refer to the Currumundi State School. I mentioned the Currumundi environment park. Many years ago, the Currumundi State School, under the stewardship of a very capable teacher, Mrs Porter, established an environmental course. That course has been wonderful for teaching primary schoolchildren about the environment and about the creatures therein. Praise should be given to Mrs Porter and other teachers for their efforts over the years in relation to the environment park at Currumundi State School.

A lot has been said about sewerage outfall and water control. We in government put \$150 million into local governments for the first time to upgrade their sewerage infrastructure. This helped a number of local government areas where sewerage infrastructure needed to be improved for quality water output to be taken into consideration. I would like that funding continued and upgraded, because there is no doubt that sewage outfall is a major component in coastal water areas, particularly on the Sunshine Coast.

The indigenous people have a long history with this area. Dr Eve Fesel of the Gubi Gubi tribe, a very able Aboriginal elder and leader, has input in relation to this. I am pleased that under this bill indigenous people will be consulted about issues pertaining to their own heritage and environment.
