



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

BILLS

Malabar Headland Protection Bill 2012

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 9 May 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Garrett, Peter, MP

Source House
Proof Yes
Responder
Question No.

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (09:02): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I rise to speak on the Malabar Headland Protection Bill 2012. The bill sets out provisions for the protection of the Malabar Headland in New South Wales, following the progressive transfer of its ownership from the Commonwealth government to the New South Wales government.

The bill has been created to prohibit the development of the site and to ensure the protection of the environmental, heritage and cultural features. This will ensure this unique site is conserved in perpetuity for the people of New South Wales.

Malabar Headland is located in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney between Maroubra Bay and Long Bay. It is an important asset not only to the local Malabar and Maroubra communities but to all people of New South Wales.

The 177-hectare site has been used for several purposes since European settlement from farming and recreational shooting to military use as a training facility, and a base and defensive position during World War II. It was also used for sandmining and then landfill operations.

Malabar Headland is a historic site with important natural and heritage values, including World War II structures and endangered ecosystems such as the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. The site holds several heritage listings for its natural, cultural, historic and landscape values. It is listed on the Commonwealth Heritage List and the New South Wales State Heritage Register. Its importance is also recognised in the Randwick Local Environmental Plan as it is registered as a Heritage Conservation Area.

The Labor government announced its policy in an election commitment in 2010 to transfer approximately 70 hectares of the Malabar Headland site to the state of New South Wales for use as a national park. In 2007, Labor announced that it would transfer the whole site to the New South Wales government and it is still the government's intention to honour that pledge.

Before transferring the Malabar property, the Commonwealth government will ensure that any public liability risks are addressed. One such risk with the Malabar Headland site is the unknown quantities and sources of contamination from its previous uses. To ensure this risk is addressed, extensive remediation is required to make the site safe for public use.

I want to seek your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker, to let you see this photo of what an absolutely beautiful and wonderful site this is but I will now return to my comments. Malabar Headland comprises three distinct areas—the western, central and eastern sections. The western section was the first section to be transferred from the Commonwealth government to the New South Wales government on 2 March this year. This 17.7-hectare area contains remnants of the Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub, eucalypt woodlands and coastal heathland.

The Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub is regarded as of extremely high conservation significance. The community was once common across the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. Due to its decline, as a result of previous clearing across the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, less than three per cent of the original community remains.

The western section had high levels of asbestos in construction waste. Following clean-up and remediation, ownership of the western section was transferred to the New South Wales government. The transfer of this land is a significant achievement and has created 17.7 hectares of national park for the community to enjoy.

The transfer of the western section is the first step in the delivery of the Labor government's commitment to create around 70 hectares of additional national park and conservation reserve. This new national park will be managed and protected by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The eastern section is the next stage of the progressive transfer of the site to the New South Wales government. Remediation works are well underway to remove the unregulated fly-tipped waste, such as old car bodies and asbestos-containing materials. Once remediated, this transfer will create around 50 hectares of national park. The eastern section is abundant in

historical and natural values. It contains the remnants of World War II fortifications constructed in response to the threat of sea-borne attack. One of these structures is known as the Boora Point Battery—an imposing, purpose-built coastal landmark, which is important for providing tangible evidence of Australia's coastal defence efforts in the Sydney area during the war.

The eastern section also contains large areas of coastal heathland, Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub and eucalypt woodland. Coastal heathland supports a distinctive fauna, including several species that have become threatened within the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority Area. The coastal heathland established on the Headland is a potential habitat for this distinctive fauna.

The central section of the Malabar Headland site was not covered by the 2010 election commitment. This area of the site was previously used for landfill operations and, as a result, is heavily contaminated. Until the Remediation Action Plan has been developed and approved by an independent accredited site auditor, it is not possible to determine the extent of the remediation required for this section.

It is the government's strategic vision to progressively transfer the entire Malabar Headland site to New South Wales for national park and public open space for all of the community. However, significantly more work is needed before consideration can be given to the transfer of the central section to the New South Wales government.

The people of New South Wales deserve this unique site to be protected as national park and public open space in perpetuity. For decades the local community has campaigned to protect Malabar Headland. I want to place on record this government's appreciation of their efforts—in particular, the Friends of Malabar Headland, including Peter Ryan, Alan Hall and many others who have worked tirelessly to rehabilitate the bushland. Their vision of a national park on Malabar Headland is now being realised.

With this bill, the Labor government has set in place the strongest protection measure that can be established to prevent this land ever being taken away from the people of New South Wales. Protection of the environmental, heritage and cultural features of this important site is a priority for this government.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.