

Full Day Hansard Transcript (Legislative Assembly, 27 February 1992, Corrected Copy)

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 27th February, 1992

Mr Speaker (The Hon. Kevin Richard Rozzoli) took the chair at 9 a.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

GARIGAL NATIONAL PARK (EXTENSION) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Dr METHERELL (Davidson) [9.0]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The eyes of history are upon this House. It is time for a new vision that embraces both environmental protection and opportunities for sustainable development for the future. This is a particularly historic opportunity for this House to complete a task that the first Australian settlers commenced more than 200 years ago when they set aside Sydney's foreshores. Recently, areas such as Kuring-Gai Chase were set aside. We have an opportunity to recognise that dream in the minds of our ancestors and to complete it by linking the Hawkesbury River in the north with Sydney Harbour in the south to form a network of national parks for future generations. I refer to our history because, no matter what our position is in the spectrum of views on environmental protection, all of us acknowledge the magnificent legacy of areas such as the Kuring-Gai Chase National Park and the Royal National Park. They and so many of the other national parks around this State and nation were left to this generation and for future generations by people who had the vision to set aside lands of natural grandeur and lands that protected our endangered flora and fauna. We should have the vision to look beyond the time line of history and ahead of our own time to the needs of our community many generations in the future. We must look to the future of our children and grandchildren, who are looking to us to set something aside from the enormous pressures of development that cities such as Sydney impose on the green corridors that still remain in our region.

We have an historic opportunity to keep faith with our ancestors and

with our Aboriginal ancestors, who, of course, were the first settlers of Australia. Much of the land in question includes some of the most valuable Aboriginal sacred, camping and carving sites in the Sydney region. They are dotted in their hundreds throughout the proposed extension to Garigal National Park. The historic opportunity to keep faith with the first white and Aboriginal settlers will enable us to enact a form of reconciliation with the Aborigines by safeguarding so many of their important sites in the Sydney region. In saying that, I acknowledge the decision of the Minister for the Environment not only to create the Garigal National Park itself, which has a history longer than that of this Government, but to make the land to the north of the proposed extensions a national park rather than a State recreation area. I pay tribute to the Minister, who gave it the name Garigal to acknowledge special links to the Aboriginal clan closest to the area where Garigal National Park has been located.

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Before I describe the areas of land proposed to be added to the Garigal National Park I shall give honourable members a brief history of Garigal National Park itself. In brief, Garigal National Park owes its existence to a land grant made to Hawker de Havilland Limited at the time of World War II. Clearly the people who made this large land grant to a private company for some general purposes associated with the wartime effort were not familiar with the land in question. They merely drew lines on a map. Much of that land proved to be totally unsuitable for the manufacturing industry, which was the perceived use of the land. It was to be the foundation of a major aircraft manufacturing industry in Australia and, of course, that never came to pass. Hawker de Havilland Limited held the land for some 20 to 30 years. It was passed down to a subsidiary company, Hawker Pacific Pty Limited, which was eventually approached by a firm of developers known as Dainford. Dainford bought the land from Hawker Pacific and then approached the Labor Government of the time with the idea of developing the land both as an industrial park and for residential subdivision. That began a long and complex series of negotiations that led finally to approximately 5 per cent of the land being set aside for a business park. That land is situated west of Forest Way and south of Mona Vale Road. The business park is now named the Austlink Business Park.

The remaining 95 per cent was vested in public ownership, which was an extraordinary achievement commenced by that Labor Government and carried through to its full fulfilment by the present Government by the creation of Garigal National Park. So a compromise was reached. A trade-off was made that, in return for 5 per cent of the land becoming a business park, 95 per cent came into public hands, and the historic opportunity was there to create Garigal National Park. That trade-off has enabled us to bring one step closer that dream - and it is a dream that I have had since I became the member for Davidson in 1981 - of a

Hawkesbury to Sydney Harbour national park. Ku-ring-gai Chase extends south to Mona Vale Road and Garigal National Park brings that park significantly further south into the North Belrose and Oxford Falls area. The Garigal National Park (Extension) Bill involves a series of land parcels which continuously will bring the Garigal National Park essentially along the Wakehurst Parkway further southward to the Manly dam reserve area, and then, hopefully, in a future extension when negotiations are successfully completed with Manly council, council reserves in the Manly area can be added to the national park to complete the corridor from the park's current location, all the way through to Sydney Harbour and Manly Beach. The final stage will await those further negotiations but this proposal brings the park to the southern boundary of Warringah shire where it abuts Manly municipality.

I shall briefly describe the major parcels of land to be added to the existing Garigal National Park, but before I do so may I give a public assurance, as I have said in my electorate and to the local community of Manly Warringah, that none of the land proposed for this extension is either private land or Crown leasehold land. No private interest is affected by this extension. It covers vacant Crown land, existing recreation reserves which are Crown land under the care and management of Warringah Shire Council, some small portions of land belonging to the Department of Housing and a former road reservation. Those lands comprise the extensions that will double the size of Garigal National Park, adding some 2,000 to 3,000 hectares to the 2,500 hectares of the existing national park.

Having given the important assurance that no private land or leasehold land is affected by this proposal, I shall briefly describe the portions of land involved. As the Minister knows, the existing southern boundary of Garigal National Park stretches from the current Garigal signs 500 metres or so south of Mona Vale Road on Forest Way. It

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stretches in a straight line from that point eastward to the junction of the Wakehurst Parkway and Narrabeen Lagoon. Basically that comprises the southern boundary of the existing park. Immediately to the south of that line is a very large portion of vacant Crown land stretching down through northern Belrose to Oxford Falls. Where that land comes close to the Wakehurst Parkway, which is the main access through this extension area, two large corridors of recreation reserve are on either side of the Wakehurst Parkway. At the present time that land is reserved for public purposes, and is zoned and shown on planning maps accordingly. The first segment of this major proposal is to use that vacant Crown land and those existing recreation reserves to extend Garigal National Park through to Oxford Falls at approximately the line of Morgan Road and Oxford Falls Road. The first major compartment of the proposed extension would follow those two roads through to where they intersect the Wakehurst Parkway.

The second major compartment is the land south of Morgan Road and its Oxford Falls Road extension southward to Wearden Road at Belrose. Again this is vacant Crown land in several corridors around and between portions of private land and surrounding the very large landholding currently held by the Overseas Telecommunications Commission at Oxford Falls. It is important that this land be set aside now because of development pressures resulting from the sewerage line running through Oxford Falls along the Wakehurst Parkway. These include developments such as Aussat on Forest Way and OTC at Oxford Falls, the availability of water and sewerage as a result of developments such as OTC, the sewerage of the northern portion of Frenchs Forest and the provision of sewerage to the Austlink Business Park at the intersection of Mona Vale Road and Forest Way. Those development pressures are impinging dramatically on northern Belrose and have already been acknowledged by the Government in its latest announcement of major urban land releases in the Ingleside and Warriewood Valley area.

So far northern Belrose has not been designated for future urban development but clearly an historic choice needs to be made - and made soon - about these vacant Crown lands if they are not to be frittered away by piecemeal development. One such example is a portion of Department of Housing land purchased from the Department of Lands. This land is located on Wearden Road and is currently unserviced, unzoned and undeveloped. However, a notional Department of Housing subdivision - if it were to go ahead - would mean that the portion north of Wearden Road would essentially be sacrificed for development. Once the services were provided the pressures that would follow on surrounding Crown land compartments would almost certainly mean that the opportunity for further park extensions in the Wearden Road area would be lost.

I turn to the third major compartment, a substantial corridor of recreation reserve on the eastern side of Wakehurst Parkway - portions of former road reservation, of which the Minister is well aware. Again, I congratulate him upon his joint campaign with me in lifting the county road reservation from St Ives to Dee Why, which has enabled some 11 kilometres of former road corridor to be made available for open space reservation. This bill proposes to add that former road corridor to the Garigal National Park as an open space corridor linking the existing Garigal National Park, the proposed extension through to Oxford Falls and the Davidson Park area, which the Minister has also committed the Government to including in Garigal National Park in approximately April this year. We will then be in a position where we will have surrounded the Belrose area and, indeed, much of the Frenchs Forest area by a continuous belt of new national park and provided the basis of that vision that I have described of the Hawkesbury to Sydney Harbour national park, coming through Belrose and Oxford Falls.

We are proposing to add, east of the Wakehurst Parkway, large

portions of vacant Crown land to extend Garigal National Park to the controversial area of Red Hill,

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where there are three substantial landowners in addition to the smaller private landholders on the flanks of Red Hill. I will briefly deal with those three landholders in turn. The Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Trust had a very large hectareage granted to it by the former Labor Government a month or two before the 1988 State election. South of the Aboriginal land is a large portion of land owned by the Roman Catholic Church and the Good Samaritan Sisters. South of that again, in the most contentious part of Red Hill at the present time, is a portion of Department of Housing land, half of which has been developed already and will soon go on the market for sale, that land having been purchased from the Catholic Church. The southern half of that Department of Housing land is currently undeveloped. That land, known as stages 3 and 4 of the Department of Housing development, is proposed to be added to the Garigal National Park along with the vacant portions of Crown land to provide an effective buffer and protection of both endangered flora and fauna adjacent to the residential development off Willandra Road at Beacon Hill. That will take the existing Garigal National Park south through North Belrose and Oxford Falls, to the borders of Beacon Hill and Frenchs Forest and down to a line approximately running east to west along the Weardon Road at Belrose. I stress again that, although this land wraps around various portions of private land and Aboriginal land, no private land, Aboriginal freehold ownership or Crown leasehold land is affected by this proposal.

I will now deal with the southernmost extensions of the proposed Garigal National Park, an area south of Weardon Road and on both sides of Wakehurst Parkway. I mentioned the recreation reserves that run on both sides of Wakehurst Parkway, all along its length through Oxford Falls, Frenchs Forest and down to Seaforth. We propose to continue to use those recreation reserves as a continuous strip of open space suitable, at their narrowest, for a walking path, probably for a horse riding trail and perhaps for a cycle path or some combination of those, and, at their broader points, suitable for other purposes. They will form a narrow linkage corridor which is severed at the two points of Warringah Road on the one hand and Frenchs Forest Road on the other. At some future date, I believe that it will be necessary for pedestrian safety reasons, but also desirable from the point of view of the proposed national park extensions, to provide footbridge access over those major roads adjacent to those recreation reserve corridors so that there can be a continuous walkway all the way from the Hawkesbury River, via Ku-ring-gai Chase and Garigal in its new form, and eventually through to Sydney Harbour and Queenscliff and Manly beaches.

Following those recreational reserves we come eventually to the Manly dam reserve area which is already a Crown reserve under the

trusteeship of Warringah Shire Council. With the exception of Wakehurst Golf Club which forms part of that Manly dam reserve it is proposed to transform the reserve into the southernmost extension of the Garigal National Park. Why would that occur? First, it is important to note that the Wakehurst Golf Club does not embrace anything like the total portion of Manly dam reserve. It has a small portion in one corner that is not proposed to be included in the park. However, the rest of the reserve is in its natural state except for the body of water that was created by the Manly dam. Anyone who has walked in the reserve will know that it is a magnificent area. It is full of wonderful natural surprises, particularly along Curl Curl creek, the main watercourse in the area. That creek has a special history. It is the creek that Governor Philip followed in one of his earliest explorations from Sydney Cove. He followed it from Manly up to what has become known since as Frenchs Forest, camped at Frenchs Forest in the headwaters of Curl Curl creek just outside the Manly dam reserve and then walked on to Bungaroo where he camped one night. That area is part of the Davidson State Recreation Area. Governor Philip then moved on to the upper North Shore and back to Sydney Cove. Much of that exploration route is

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either included in the Garigal extension to Manly dam reserve or is already contained within the Davidson State Recreation Area, which in April will become part of the Garigal National Park under the separate proposals of the Chief Secretary and Minister for Administrative Services.

When one looks across the Wakehurst Parkway from Manly dam reserve one finds an equivalent area of Bantry Bay, the old munitions reserve which was so fortunately preserved for us as a result of its history as an explosives depot from the World War I period. That is one of those accidents of history; one of those small miracles of conservation for which we should all be grateful. The Manly dam reserve represents just as significant, just as natural, just as magnificent an area as Bantry Bay, which at present forms part of the Davidson State Recreation Area across the road. This is a very natural proposal, with the Davidson area going into Garigal, to have Garigal also form part of or take over the status of the Manly dam reserve immediately across the Wakehurst Parkway. At the outset I mentioned that the southern boundary of the southernmost extensions proposed by the bill is the border between the Warringah Shire Council area and the Manly municipality. I acknowledge that the member for Manly is currently holding discussions in his own electorate with conservation groups and the Manly Municipal Council and we will soon be jointly sponsoring a public meeting in the Manly Vale area for local residents to discuss further extensions of Garigal through Manly municipality to the harbour and the sea, to complete a vision that I described earlier - that great dream of a Hawkesbury to Sydney Harbour national park.

I complete my remarks with an appeal to the Government and indeed

to all honourable members of this House no matter their political background. We should all lift our eyes and look to the future. We should remember what earlier generations and people of great vision set aside for us in areas like Ku-ring-gai Chase and the Royal National Park, recognise this historic opportunity that we have to undertake a similar great mission, and join our dreams with the dreaming of the Aboriginal ancestors - whose sites are found throughout the existing Garigal National Park and these magnificent extensions as proposed - and the dreams of the first white settlers who had that vision to set aside so many of the areas that we enjoy throughout the State. I also make an appeal to the Premier as the Leader of the Government, that in preparing - as I know he is, and as he has mentioned in the House - his vision statement, which will be presented to us in the Parliament later in the session, he embrace this and other balanced proposals of an environmental nature that will add for future generations a great environmental heritage. I ask all other members of the House whether it is possible for them to rise above their political persuasions and alignments and recognise that there is a greater duty upon all of us to serve the public interest and to preserve something of our natural heritage for the future, and to do so in a balanced and responsible way. In that spirit I commend to the Government and to all members of the House the Garigal National Park Extension Bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling on the next notice of motion I advise the honourable member for Davidson, or whoever was responsible for bringing into the House the map that is on the table, that such action should take place only with the concurrence of the Chair. Honourable members will know that maps cannot be incorporated in *Hansard* and therefore it is necessary to describe them. The customary practice, which is to have maps mounted in the foyer of Parliament House, is a much more desirable procedure than placing them on the table of the House. I say that for the future guidance of members.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Moore.