



NSW Legislative Council Hansard

Save Orange Grove Bill

Extract from NSW Legislative Council Hansard and Papers Wednesday 1 September 2004.

Second Reading

The Hon. JOHN RYAN [11.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The issues this bill deals with are reasonably simple and have been canvassed at length in the media for many weeks. I think most honourable members already have enough knowledge of this matter to make up their minds on this bill, so I do not believe that there will be any difficulty in our dealing with the matter urgently, and, if possible, today. The purpose of the Save Orange Grove Bill is to rezone the land at Orange Grove occupied by the designer factory outlets. The bill achieves the same purpose as the proposed amendment to the Liverpool local environment plan [LEP] that was suggested by the administrator of Liverpool council, Ms Gabrielle Kibble, but which was recently rejected by the Carr Government. It will not approve the factory outlets but it will enable Liverpool council to grant a development approval, subject to any appropriate planning condition.

As we all know, the designer outlets owned by Gazcorp were opened last year by planning Minister Craig Knowles, who not only represents part of the City of Liverpool but has previously been on its council and its mayor. At that time he declared the outlets to be "great for Liverpool". I could not agree more. While there may not be 400 people working there now, the outlets offer employment for a potential 400 or more workers. They provide \$30 million worth of economic activity to Liverpool and they represent 60 small business holders who have, for the most part, invested their life savings in them. Liverpool City Council gave the development consent in November 2002. Six months after the council had approved them, in June 2003, retail shopping giant Westfield Holdings commenced legal action against the outlets in the Land and Environment Court.

Westfield has a longstanding objection to factory outlets because of what it fears, or says, is unfair competition from cheap rents made possible from using cheap industrial land. While I have every respect for Westfield attempting to preserve the value of its business, it should be recognised that its legal action was not some sort of altruistic public service: it was plainly and simply a transparent effort to shut down a competitor. The Land and Environment Court determined on 16 January 2004 that the development consent given by the council was invalid. However, the argument in court was limited to the legality of the approval. The planning merits were not considered. The appeal against the decision of the court was lost on 31 March 2004. However, Liverpool City Council planners saw great merit in the designer outlets remaining open and they applied to the State Government for a spot rezoning to regularise the existing use. They resolved to do so on 8 December 2003—one full month before the Land and Environment Court had made any determination on this case.

This application was very similar to many actions taken by this and previous State governments in anticipation of court action. One great irony of this matter is that Westfield Holdings was once the beneficiary of very similar action by the former Wran Labor Government, which rezoned land that used to be a tram depot in order to enable Westfield to build a shopping complex at Eastlakes which, at that time, was being hotly contested by its competitors. In April 2004 the Liverpool council administrator, Ms Gabrielle Kibble, forwarded an application to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources [DIPNR] for a change to the Liverpool local environment plan to rezone the land at Orange Grove to enable the factory outlets to be approved. She recommended that the LEP be approved. She has recently explained that she did so for social and economic reasons but she has also stated that the application had merit, and that if it had not, she would not have approved it.

I have seen many attempts over recent days to rewrite history in regard to Ms Kibble's principled decision to support the rezoning application. I have watched representatives of the State government and Westfield put words in her mouth, suggesting that this decision was an inherited legacy and she was acting in the interests of the council, or that although she considered the rezoning application had good social and economic reasons to commend it, she had a private belief that it had dubious planning merit. These are all efforts to put words in Ms Kibble's mouth to suggest that she did not really believe in the proposal. I find any such suggestion outrageous. Ms Kibble is a principled person. She is a distinguished public servant. She has held senior offices under Coalition and Labor governments and she has received an Australian honour.

I could not imagine any suggestion more offensive than the nonsense being peddled by the Carr Government that she did not really believe in this decision. I am absolutely sure she did. She would have been aware that if the Government had approved the amendment to the LEP she would have been charged with the responsibility of actually approving the factory outlets. I cannot imagine that she would have initiated action which would have had that outcome if she had not believed that there was planning merit in the application proceeding. Planning is her primary task as the Liverpool council administrator. Every decision she makes is a planning decision and I cannot imagine that she would have been in any way insincere in putting up her name and reputation in support of this rezoning. The Government should face facts. Gabrielle Kibble supports what we are proposing to the House today.

Finally it should be pointed out that social and economic considerations are relevant issues covered by planning instruments and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. They are planning grounds. They are not something separate and distinct from them. A planning report prepared by DIPNR staff under section 69 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act also recommends that the Minister should approve the amendment to the LEP. The report deals with all of the relevant planning considerations. The section 69 report prepared by the DIPNR concluded that the net community benefits of the factory outlets staying open outweighed the disbenefits. That conclusion was based on considerations relating to consumer choice, business competition, local employment generation, the close proximity of the site to the Liverpool central business district [CBD], and because the site was located on an established bus route, that is, route 800. It also found that the economic impacts of the factory outlets would not be significant on the Liverpool CBD and that it would be reduced over time by the impact of an expected future population growth in Liverpool.

I point out that Liverpool is in close proximity to the Bringelly development. Hundreds of thousands of people are soon to move into that area and there is room for all of these retail outlets. There is no doubt that the Liverpool CBD and the trading hub will grow, and possibly occupy the land which is adjacent to the factory outlets. The conclusion in the report was supported by not one but three economic impact statements prepared by professional consultants. The report also noted that even though the factory outlets have been operating near the Liverpool CBD, two major extensions of existing shopping centres have been approved and building has commenced. That is hardly action one expects from a dying Liverpool CBD. Attached to the report was a draft press release of the Minister which stated that the outlets centre would provide 400 local jobs and ensure that local residents would not have to travel outside the region to visit factory outlets. That is a clear demonstration that there was planning merit in this decision.

I believe that the section 69 report demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that the rezoning of the Orange Grove site has clear planning merit. The first thing I would like to point out to the House is that it is extremely rare for a section 69 report to be rejected by a Minister. One of the people who prepared this report could not remember a single instance of a planning report such as that which is now required by section 69 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act being rejected by a Minister in the 20 years of her career experience. Of course, these reports are not Holy Writ, but one would expect that if one were to be rejected the circumstances would have to be extraordinary and it would have to be accompanied by well-documented and well-supported reasons.

I might point out that this report is unusual in one further respect. Not only has it been endorsed by the

two planners who prepared it, but it has been additionally endorsed by one of the most senior planners in DIPNR—namely, Mr Gary Prattley. Mr Prattley is not a junior planner in DIPNR. He is the person who normally briefs the Minister on all planning issues pertaining to municipal planning. I believe that recently, under some political and bureaucratic pressure, Mr Prattley has said that he endorsed the report only because he thought it was not sufficiently flawed for him not to endorse it. However, on reflection, he said that he agrees with the views expressed by those within his department who now question it. What abject nonsense! If the report was no good, he should not have endorsed it. So, if he can endorse it, then so can all of us—and I hope the House does so today.

The Director-General of DIPNR, Jennifer Westacott, disagreed with the conclusions of the section 69 report, but her objections have been hotly disputed because of their lack of detail and because they do not give sufficient weight to issues such as employment generation and the operation of the existing centre. I recognise that some will have trouble with the suggestion I am about to make, but I believe that all of the documentation provided to the Government showed that everything she has produced and given to the Government on this matter has all the hallmarks of a political fix. I refer to her first memorandum. It sets out a series of objections to the contents of the section 69 report in a number of dot points. They contain no detail. They consist of only one English sentence. And, taken alone, I would defy anyone to make any sense of them.

I will read those dot points to the House. She said that she found it unconvincing because of the inadequacy of public transport—nothing about that; the inconsistency with the spirit and intent of the centre's policy—whatever that means; adverse economic effect on the existing nearby retail centres; inconsistency with planning rationale behind draft SEPP 66; and the proposal being satisfactory based on some "emerging trend in the USA". That is all she said about it.

The Hon. Greg Pearce: When was that?

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: That was on 25 June. I do not think there is any doubt that this memorandum was attached to the file in great haste. Its primary purpose was not to convince the Minister. It was placed on the file on a day on which DIPNR was subject to a subpoena by Gazcorp, relating to an action being taken in the courts. They had successfully been granted access to the section 69 report, and it contained a clear and unambiguous recommendation that the Minister should agree to the land being rezoned. It is obvious what impact that would have had had that report been presented to the court without qualification.

I believe that Ms Westacott was aware that the Carr Government no longer supported this project. To save her Minister future political embarrassment, two pages were quickly added to the file that was being subpoenaed in order to cast doubt on whether that recommendation contained in the section 69 report would be accepted. One page was a single-sentence memorandum to Mr Prattley telling him that the director-general required some further information, and the other was the memorandum to the Minister that I have just read to the House. That was all the detail the Minister got. The impact of the single-page memorandum on the court is apparent because the five dot points are referred to in the judge's judgment. I believe that some time before 25 June 2004 the Minister communicated to the director-general that she no longer wanted to support the local environmental plan. The file cover records the fact that Ms Westacott had seen and referred the file to Mr Prattley on an earlier occasion, and there is no suggestion at that time that she had any problem with any of its contents.

At this point I express one other obvious problem I have in believing anything the Carr Government has said about the consideration of this matter. I do not believe that assistant planning Minister Diane Beamer made this incredibly sensitive decision all on her own based on what she says were sound planning grounds. This is because the decision is obviously very sensitive. This was a matter that involved 400 jobs and millions of dollars worth of business investment. The building in which the factory outlets operate cost more than \$20 million to erect. Those reasons alone would have been reason for the matter to be considered a strategic and sensitive decision requiring consideration by more than one junior Minister operating under some cone of silence. We also know that it had been the subject of intense lobbying from members of Parliament, Westfield and other corporations. Apparently, it had also been suggested to no

less than the Premier that there might have been inappropriate lobbying or corrupt conduct. But, of course, no-one will identify those allegations.

Normal considerations of government would require that this matter would have passed through the hands of more than one Minister. We all know how centralised and controlled the Carr Government is. No Minister in the Carr Government is allowed to issue so much as a media release without approval from the Premier's Office, let alone make a decision to junk 400 jobs! There is no way I will ever believe that Diane Beamer made this decision all by herself, without any input from more senior Ministers, including the Premier. It would have been irresponsible, for one thing; and it would have been completely out of character for the Carr Government, for another. We do not need Joe Tripodi to tell us that this decision was not made by Diane Beamer alone. The Carr Government is simply blowing hot air by saying otherwise. No-one, but no-one, believes them.

The Carr Government has argued that the factory outlets do not conform to their business centres policy, that the original development approval by Liverpool council was "dodgy" and that it would give a one-off economic windfall worth \$5 million to Gazcorp, the owner of the factory outlets. I concede that there were some minor points of untidiness in the approval of this matter by Liverpool council. But the only significant issue was that it was exhibited after it had been considered by the council for 10 months, and that after it was exhibited there were no objections, so a development consent was given. Given that it took 10 months to get through the council, it hardly suggests favourable consideration.

All aspects of the approval have been investigated by the newly appointed general manager of the council, Mr Garry McCully, and he is satisfied that there was no corruption involved in the approval process, and he is satisfied that nobody received favourable treatment. Of course, there have been questions raised about the former Liverpool council over the Oasis development, but it would be ridiculous to suggest that this affair taints every decision made by the former council. And finally, and most importantly, the decision to apply for this site to be rezoned was endorsed by the new, independent and utterly reliable council administrator, Ms Gabrielle Kibble.

I come to suggestions being made by the Carr Government that Gazcorp and its officials are corrupt. These are nothing more than a subterfuge on the part of the Government to excuse itself from taking responsibility for the fact that it may have destroyed 400 jobs by not rezoning the site. Apparently, according to Joe Tripodi, at the request of Frank Lowy, the chairman of Westfield asked the Premier to "screw" the project. There is one point I would make about the Premier's claims about Gazcorp and its officials and other people on Liverpool council being dodgy, and this development approval being the result of some dodgy agreement in Liverpool.

Let me say that there is another person known to all of us who holds his office as a result of a dodgy agreement given at Liverpool. It is none other than the Premier himself. The Premier was under threat, before he was elected to that office, from Peter Anderson. We all know what happened to Peter Anderson. He was rolled by Paul Lynch in preselection. The Special Minister of State, Mr Della Bosca, knows for a fact, and received documentation for a fact, that that preselection was utterly rorted. He received statutory declarations, photocopies of passports that had been stamped in Lebanon—

The Hon. John Della Bosca: Like Queensland Liberal Senators, you could paper the walls with them.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: I do not think a copy of a passport stamped in Lebanon is something you would paper walls with. We all know that the preselection was lost by Peter Anderson by only a handful of votes—more than the number of people who were in Lebanon at the time the preselection was conducted.

Minister Della Bosca knows that the preselection was rorted and dodgy. As a result of not being challenged by Peter Anderson, Mr Carr became the Premier. I understand the meeting he conducted was with Leo McLeay, Anthony Albanese and other Labor Party officials. He knows the truth but for some reason or another, known only to him, he decided to take no action. That tells us all about the Carr Government. The one difference between Gazcorp and the Premier is that, unlike the Premier,

representatives of Gazcorp have come to the parliamentary inquiry and submitted themselves to all our questions day after day after day. The Premier did not come. Ms Beamer did not come. Craig Knowles did not come. And, of all people, Joe Tripodi did not come. Yet if the series of statements that were made about him were made about me, wild horses would not have kept me away from confronting a live media conference and saying that those claims were untrue.

What do we have from Joe Tripodi? A three-sentence press release, written in 20-point type, and some lame excuse that he cannot speak any further because the ICAC would intervene. Yesterday I spoke to a journalist who inquired of the ICAC and, although it did not want to go on the record, the ICAC advised him that there was no reason why Mr Tripodi could not give his reasons in public. It is a spurious excuse. It is rubbish. I challenge the Government to seek and get that advice in writing—but it will not come. Tripodi is avoiding scrutiny. I believe Mr Gazal, I believe Mr Bargshoon, I believe Mr Mosca and I believe Mr D'agostino. They all tell the story knowing where it happened. They know the words that were used. They know all the details and they give them plainly and simply. They have come to the committee and have been examined by the committee. Everyone else involved wants to speak in sound bites under controlled conditions to the media. They are not prepared to come and give evidence.

On the occasion when we have been able to test the veracity of their evidence it is surprising how often it has been found to be false. We have had the Premier saying, "Oh, that meeting with Westfield", and suddenly we discover that Westfield sought a meeting with his chief of staff. We have the planning Minister, Diane Beamer, saying, "Oh, that direction. I didn't know I was told, 'Stick to the rules'", even though she was. Then, when I asked the Minister's chief of staff during the committee hearing, "Did anyone else make representations to you on this?", he said, "No." Then I read him a letter from Julian Brophy, a former Carr Government senior adviser, who twice came in for a cup of coffee with him to discuss Orange Grove, and he said, "Oh, that cup of coffee." The Carr Government cannot lie straight in bed on this: it lies and it lies and it lies. It has the hide to accuse Gazcorp and its directors of speaking falsehoods, but it will not face the music. It will not face any sort of questioning.

Allegations of corruption should be of more concern to the Labor Party. I refer to some of the things raised on *Stateline* at the end of last week. It appears to be true that the Hon. Eric Roozendaal knew that Sam Bargshoon was not bashed up by left-wingers, but by robbers in a pub. He elected to deceive the media, the Labor Party conference and everyone else allowing them to believe that, somehow or another, this bashing was related to party factional activity. It appears to be true that the 1995 preselection for the electorate of Liverpool, which saw the defeat of Peter Anderson by Paul Lynch by a handful of votes, was comprehensively rorted. So what! While they might speak volumes about the state of the New South Wales Labor Party they have nothing to do with Mr Gazal or this approval. One of the most distressing allegations made by Labor and Westfield identities, including the Premier, is that Mr Gazal had some sort of improper association with convicted murderer Phuong Ngo. The part of this story that is always neglected is that Mr Gazal was introduced to Phuong Ngo by people such as Joe Tripodi and Reba Meagher.

If Mr Gazal is suspicious or seedy or has a stench about him, to use the words of Michael Meagher, what does that say about the other Ministers who also dealt with him? I believe that one of the stories being peddled about Mr Gazal is that he bought a property option from Phuong Ngo. Mr Gazal informs me that that is true, but there is nothing suspicious about it. But I will tell you what is suspicious: He wanted to find out some more information about the future zoning of the land he was purchasing from Mr Phuong Ngo long before it was ever thought that Mr Phuong Ngo was a murderer. He carried out this transaction in absolute good faith. But he needed to find out some more information about it. Do honourable members know where Phuong Ngo took him to get more information? He took him to Craig Knowles's office. They went to Craig Knowles's office and he produced a letter written by Gabrielle Kibble giving the details of what was going to happen to this land.

Apparently Phuong Ngo knew not only Reba Meagher and Joe Tripodi, but he also knew Craig Knowles well enough to walk into his ministerial office, order his staff around and get a letter from them. As I said, if Mr Gazal has anything wrong with him what does that say about the rest of the Labor Party who are up to their necks in association with Phuong Ngo? Yesterday the Parliament was abuzz with stories that the

Premier was going to dump a bombshell in the other House about allegations of corruption against Mr Gazal, including that Mr Gazal was responsible for branch stacking and that he had funded branch stacking. When I discovered these allegations I said to Mr Gazal, "Look, is there any truth to that?" He said, "There absolutely isn't any truth to it." But what he did tell me is that years ago, when he first met Mr Joe Tripodi, Mr Tripodi asked him for a donation to his campaign fund, to which Mr Gazal was happy to—

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: That's illegal.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: There is nothing illegal about that. Mr Gazal was happy to do that, but he thought it was a regular campaign donation. Some weeks later Mr Tripodi came to him with another member of the ALP and said, "Can we have the donation of approximately \$10,000 in cash?" Why? Because he wanted to use it to fund memberships to his local branches of the ALP. Do you know what Mr Gazal said? "No." He would not do it. If there is any suggestion that the ALP has documentation that suggests that Mr Gazal funded a branch-stacking exercise, then someone has taken his legitimate donations and used them for a purpose that Mr Gazal has not authorised. The only people who have questions to answer are those in Sussex Street and the Carr Government. If they are going to make allegations about Mr Gazal they had better make sure that they do not backfire on them. If the outlets close, a \$22 million purpose-built building will be left a total waste and idle. If they close, the ratepayers of Western Sydney will be left to pick up a potential compensation deal that may run to \$80 million.

If the outlets are forced to close, who knows what will happen to the mum and dad investors who have sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into their shops to set up these small businesses. They have incurred legal fees for council approvals and leases and, in some cases, they have bought franchises. They fitted out their shops and spent thousands of dollars buying stock. Many of them are fulfilling the dream of getting ahead by being industrious and independent. I might use Mark Latham's words, "They're climbing the rungs of the ladder of opportunity." If this bill is not passed or this action is not taken, the wreckage will be enormous—400 more people in Liverpool than necessary will be on the dole queue. The bill to rezone the land is a commonsense solution to a dreadful situation. There is no doubt that all the employees who work at Orange Grove, many of whom are present in the gallery, and small business operators who have established shops and outlets have acted in good faith. They do not deserve to suffer a financial fate from which many of them will never recover.

The bill is about keeping human casualties in this situation to a minimum. The proposal to rezone the land has been endorsed by professional planning staff of Liverpool council. It has been endorsed by one of this State's finest planners, Gabrielle Kibble. Three professional planners from the New South Wales Department of Natural Resources and Infrastructure have endorsed it, and it has been the subject of three financial impact statements. Planning Minister, Craig Knowles, officiated at the opening and said that it would be great for Liverpool. It really is difficult. I quote from a statement made by the honourable member for Fairfield, Joe Tripodi, in which he said, "It's a no-brainer." It sure is a no-brainer. The bill should be passed. The factory outlets should be rezoned and we should save all of these distressing consequences right now. It is difficult to understand why the Carr Government is opposed to rezoning this land when only yesterday the Federal Labor leader, Mark Latham, called on the Government to reconsider this matter. He said:

I just trust and hope that these inquiries sort it out and if there's an argument for rezoning the site—if that was the fair thing to do—and allow these retail chains to re-establish themselves, then that should happen.

I could not agree with him more. During the past week I have been interested to see many examples of people power. It has been similar to watching the crowds at Malacañang Palace in the Philippines during the fall of the Marcos Government. Thousands of people have been filing through the factory outlets centre to show their support. Yesterday a petition was presented to this House bearing the signatures of thousands of people who support the factory outlets and what the shops are designed to do. There is no doubt that the community wants this land to be rezoned. The community does not believe the nonsense peddled by the Carr Government about the factory outlets being shonky, dodgy and so on. The people of New South Wales want the factory outlets land rezoned, they want the associated economic activity

retained in Liverpool, they want the 400 jobs to be saved, and they want the 60 businesspeople—the mum and dad investors—to be rescued from what will be an awful fate. [*Time expired.*]

Motion by the Hon. Don Harwin agreed to:

That leave be granted to enable the Hon. John Ryan to continue his speech.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: As I have walked through the factory outlets centre, many people have put their cases to me. I believe that the House should be aware of them. I refer to the Nasser family who have paid in the order of \$450,000 for a Gloria Jean's franchise, which will be worth nothing when the factory outlets are unable to trade. Could anyone in this Chamber bear the loss of \$450,000 because the Carr Government will not give serious consideration to a simple commonsense measure to rezone these outlets? I refer to the man who operates the kebab shop at the back of the centre—I think his name is John. He has invested \$275,000 to build a kebab shop and fit it out with ovens and other equipment. He has probably made other investments to operate his business. If the factory outlets centre goes down, he will be broke, he will lose his house and he will be ruined. It will be on the head of the Government, of which the Special Minister of State who is at the table is a member, if that man is ruined. There is absolutely no need for that to happen.

The factory outlets centre is trading successfully. Frankly, I think it is appropriate to say that it is a festive experience to go to the factory outlets centre. Thousands of people go there and have a great time doing their shopping. Why would anyone want to deny \$30 million worth of economic activity to Liverpool, of all places—it has the highest level of unemployment in Australia?

The Hon. Rick Colless: Unbelievable!

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: It is unbelievable. One of the points made in the section 69 report, which was included in the Minister's draft press release, is that the factory outlets are not just a facility for people who live in Liverpool but are visited by people from all over New South Wales who want to experience a couple of days of bargain shopping. That point has been proved by the petition that was recently organised by Gazcorp at the retail trading outlets. As customers have walked through the shops they have been invited to sign a petition. I believe that approximately 40,000 people have signed the petition. An examination of the petition reveals where these people live. Approximately 60 per cent of the people are locals, and the other 40 per cent are people who have travelled across town and who have passed two or three other large retail outlets, such as Westfield, to experience shopping at the factory outlets centre at Liverpool. A visit to the centre is almost a tourist experience.

We all know what factory outlets shopping is about. It is not a place where people go to obtain regular shopping items and where the purchase of clothing involves someone ensuring that the clothes fit properly; it is a place where people go to find a bargain. People accept that they will have to rummage through boxes to find what they want, but when they pay a small amount for what they have chosen they are happy with what they have purchased. If people do what I do, they go to factory outlets with money in their pockets that they intend to blow, and they do that largely for the same reason as people bet or attend a concert—it is as much entertainment as it is anything else. The function of this factory outlets centre will not stop people from going to Westfield to do their regular shopping at supermarkets, newsagents, chemists and so on. A factory outlets centre is a place where people innocently blow a bit of money on a few items such as cosmetics, home wares and fashion goods.

Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes: And kebabs.

The Hon. JOHN RYAN: And kebabs, while having a cup of coffee with their friends—just as, I understand, Joe Tripodi does. The centre is an incredibly festive place. It is doing a great job for Liverpool and for the community in providing much-needed economic activity. Why the killjoys opposite would want to bring that to a halt, just because Westfield asks them to, is baffling. The Labor Party has chosen to walk away from the workers of Liverpool to support its corporate sponsors and corporate donors. The Liberal Party is proud of the fact that it attracts corporate sponsorship and supports the

principles of industry and enterprise, but it is in no way beholden to sponsorship as though it is a sector that must be obeyed or the tune to which the Liberal Party has to march. The Liberal Party accepts the views of sponsors and in most instances, when it is at all possible, supports and endorses what they want to do; but they are not God and they do not tell ordinary businesspeople who occupy premises in the factory outlets centre what they should do and how they should run their businesses. The Liberal Party also does not accept that the business needs of sponsors are somehow to be considered over and above the ordinary working-class people of Liverpool, some of whom constitute the staff of the factory outlets. The Liberal Party's position is that everybody should be considered in turn.

There is no sensible argument to sustain the proposition that the factory outlets centre will ruin Liverpool. The worst possibility that has been suggested is that, over two years, it might take approximately \$18 million in economic activity out of Liverpool. The first point I make about that suggestion is that it is \$18 million gross in economic activity. It is not profit, which is what counts as far as Liverpool is concerned. In any event, even though the centre may take that amount over two years from the central business district, it will bring back to the Liverpool region \$30 million worth of trade. But if the centre closes, that trade will go to Birkenhead Point, Mount Druitt or, in some instances, Harbourtown on the Gold Coast in Queensland. Factory outlets shopping is a recognised form of retail activity which already exists. Our planning laws ought sensibly to recognise that, and I believe that one day they will.

The designer outlets centre at Liverpool is not a greenfields site but is a completed shopping centre in which real flesh and blood people have invested. They have hopes and dreams, but they will suffer significant losses if the land on which the centre has been built is not rezoned. I do not understand for one minute why the Carr Government will not listen to their cries for help. I just do not understand it, nor do I understand why the Carr Government will not intervene and make a sensible decision that has been endorsed by planners. The Carr Labor Government prefers a political fix, and that is a mystery to me. The Government's only response has been to make spurious allegations of corruption. Many of the allegations have not been defined, and certainly none has been proven. In most cases, the Government has not had the courage to define its allegations clearly. The few instances of allegations that it has defined have been comprehensively rebutted.

I ask the House to consider this matter urgently and seriously. The Coalition is not interested in lining the pockets of Gazcorp but, rather, is all about restoring the future of 60 small businesspeople and 400 semiskilled female job applicants who potentially will be looking for work as a result of the Government's failure to act appropriately. Most of the workers affected by the Government's decision are semiskilled females and they will be looking for employment in a sector where there are few opportunities. Why would not the Government listen to the needs of those people and respond appropriately? As matters stand at the moment, the Coalition is listening, but members opposite are not. I sincerely hope that it is not the Government's intention that none of its members will speak during this debate.