

ROYAL REHABILITATION CENTRE SYDNEY SITE PROTECTION BILL 2007

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts.

Agreement in Principle

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) [10.27 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney Site Protection Bill 2007 will protect the site of the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney at Putney by ensuring that the City of Ryde Council remains the consent authority for any application to carry out development on the site. It will prohibit the carrying out of excessive development on the site by ensuring that satisfactory alternative arrangements are made for users of the site displaced by any development, including the Riding for the Disabled Association of New South Wales. It will protect certain buildings on the site from demolition or alteration and require them to be maintained by reserving part of the site as public open space. It will require community consultation in relation to the carrying out of development on the site and the management of that open space.

This is of significant concern not only to the people of Putney but also to those in the surrounding districts. This morning on 2GB with Jason Morrison I was privileged to present the concerns of the Weemala Residents and Advocates Committee. About 41 vulnerable residents have lived in Weemala for up to 50 years. The member for Hawkesbury, who shows a great deal of care and concern for his community, will understand—and I notice he agrees with me—these people must be protected. It is unfortunate that I have to raise in this House the fact that they will be thrown out of their homes in Putney.

I pay tribute to their carers, their loving family members and friends, who spend so much time with people who are not only wheelchair bound but also confined to bed as a result of various spinal and brain injuries. These people are going to be thrown out of their home and sent to, allegedly, community housing because of the greed of the board of the Royal Ryde Rehabilitation Centre. These people live on site. It was originally set up as the Home for Incurables and was given, token value, to a board to ensure that these people would be looked after. There will be 800 units built on the site—an overdevelopment. I want to praise the Prime Minister for his stance on this issue. The Prime Minister has served his electorate well for more than three decades.

Mr Ray Williams: Tirelessly.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Tirelessly. The member for Hawkesbury is spot on.

Mr Ray Williams: Passionately.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The Prime Minister has a passionate commitment. He has served tirelessly not just the people of Bennelong but also the people of this country. I put on record that our country has not been better served by any Prime Minister in its history than by Prime Minister John Howard. These 41 individuals, the most vulnerable of our community, are more victims of the Minister for Planning Frank Sartor's planning policies in New South Wales.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Shameful.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is shameful. The member for Willoughby is spot on. We all suffer from the disgraceful, draconian policies of cranky Frankie, the Godzilla of planning who crashes his way through New South Wales. I will put on record an open letter the Prime Minister wrote to Frank Sartor, the Minister for Planning?or lack of planning?about the proposed development of the Royal Ryde Rehabilitation Centre. The Prime Minister wrote:

Dear Mr Sartor,

I write to voice the concern of many residents of Bennelong to the proposed development of the Royal Rehabilitation Centre, Sydney site at Ryde.

The plan you approved in March 2006 will see the development of up to 800 dwellings on just sixteen hectares of residual land on the site.

Although this matter falls within the responsibility of your government, I continue to receive telephone calls and letters from concerned local residents about this issue.

The residents are very concerned. He continues:

Ryde City Council has urged you to channel ingress and egress traffic onto Victoria Road, not Charles Street or Morrison Road. Traffic flows on Morrison Road are already 300 per cent above your Roads and Traffic Authority's own guidelines.

This is their own guidelines. The Roads and Traffic Authority's guidelines state that the traffic flows are 300 per cent above expected limits. That shows the Government's lack of planning and stupidity when it wants to add another 4,000 movements on that road. There was a fatality of an elderly resident—may God rest her soul—three weeks ago. An extra 4,000 movements is disgraceful.

Mr Steve Whan: Have you still got the poster up on your wall?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The member for Monaro seems to find the fatality of an old lady amusing.

Debate resumed from 28 June 2007.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) [10.00 a.m.]: I speak today with a determination to see the right thing done in relation to the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney Site Protection Bill. I have spoken on this matter many times before in the House and I do so again, conscious of my duty to the people of Putney, my electorate as a whole and my principles. In pursuance of the wellbeing—

The SPEAKER: Order! Hansard is having a little trouble understanding you, and so am I.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I will do my best. I should just table the speech. In pursuance of the wellbeing and harmony of his or her community, a member of Parliament cannot do enough to protect and serve the community and, as legislators in this House, we must all do what we can to achieve good and responsible governance, something we do not often see in New South Wales under this Government. Sadly, as I have said many times before, good governance and concern for the wellbeing of the community do not seem to be in the minds of Frank Sartor, the Godzilla of planning—or lack of it—and the State Labor Government when it comes to the fate of the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney in Putney. It is the hope of this community that Parliament, in these final hours, will respond to their pleas and set a precedent for other communities that are similarly straining under the pressures of inadequate infrastructure and the destruction of their traditional family-oriented communities.

As I have stated before in this place, no-one in the community is against reasonable and sustainable development. However, no-one can claim that development that will increase the number of dwellings in the suburb of Putney by 50 per cent is a reasonable or sustainable development. The traffic increase alone will turn a quiet, family-friendly area into a quagmire of cars and a haze of pollution. Thousands of additional vehicle movements in local streets that are, by Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] guidelines, already 300 per cent above

capacity will bring ruination to this vibrant and close community. The question must be asked why the RTA still ignores its own guidelines by forcing traffic onto local roads, and going against Mr Iemma's metropolitan strategy of quarantining 85 per cent of Sydney's streets from a sizeable loss of amenity. There has been a recent pedestrian death on Morrison Road and the question must be asked: how many more deaths will this Labor Government ignore before they face up to the fact that our local roads in Putney are on their way to becoming killing zones endorsed by this lazy and arrogant Labor Party and their developer mates.

The local community has partaken in three public rallies, attended by thousands of concerned and justifiably angry residents and thousands have petitioned the Government in righteous indignation against Frank Sartor's plans to destroy their suburb. I have been proud to stand shoulder to shoulder, and will continue to do so, with our local community advocates Rolf Clapham, recipient of our local State community leader of the year award; Bill Pickering; Eleanor Chaine; Sue MacGregor; Ted Weber; Kylie Rennie; Rona Agnew; Kath Balnase; Sue Bourne and Grahame Clift, to name a few. What a wonderful job they have done of standing up for the good of the community. I am proud to call them friends.

Thanks should also go to Ryde City Council, the member for Bennelong, and Prime Minister John Howard for their continued support. Great thanks should go to John Booth and Ulrike Eichmeyer of *The Weekly Times* for their wonderful support and the *Northern District Times*, particularly journalist Mr John Blair, a most articulate and professional journalist, who has been a great advocate for the victims of this overdevelopment. Special heartfelt thanks must go also to Alan Jones and Ray Hadley of Radio 2GB whose monumental advocacy and support for the victims and underdogs in this issue has been fantastic. It should be noted that the Federal Labor candidate seems to have fallen in with State Labor—the support from that direction has been deafening in its silence.

I now draw the House's attention to the plight of Weemala residents and Riding for the Disabled. It should be placed on the public record here that just as the Putney community has been forced into a position at the edge of destruction it neither sought nor deserved, these individuals have become victims of Frank Sartor's arrogance and lack of planning ability. The residents of Weemala and members of Riding for the Disabled would not have had to endure uncertainty of a home, or the pain of uncertainty, if planning powers had remained with Ryde City Council. Let me make this very clear: the residents of Weemala and the members of Riding for the Disabled must be looked after. I am proud to be part of a Liberal-National Coalition in New South Wales that has placed on public record its support for the community on this issue—that planning powers should revert to Ryde City Council.

The House should also note that it is a widely held view that this overdevelopment at Putney was suspect from the start and has become more suspect as it has progressed. Lack of consultation, arrogance, greed and misinformation are the foundations of the 800 dwellings proposed for the site. It is not too late for Frank Sartor and the State Government to listen to the case of reason and fairness put forward by the people of Putney. It is not too late to hear their pleas to save their community. At the very least, the people of Putney deserve to be protected from an unacceptable increase in traffic numbers on their local streets, by making all ingress and egress to the overdevelopment via Victoria Road.