

CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARK TRUST AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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Bill introduced on motion by Ms Robyn Parker.

Agreement in Principle

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [3.39 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

This bill makes amendments to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act 1983 to improve the environmental, financial and social sustainability of an important government asset—an asset that was used and enjoyed by the community on more than 11 million occasions last year alone, making this one of the most visited public parklands in Australia. Centennial Parklands comprises three parks—Centennial Park, Moore Park and Queens Park. It covers more than 360 hectares in the heavily populated areas just five kilometres south-east of the Sydney central business district, and was once referred to by author Patrick White as "the lungs of the city".

The unique cultural values of the three main parks are recognised by their listing on the State Heritage Register. In my dual capacity as Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage I support and endorse this wonderful collection of parks. In addition, components of the parks have national, State and local heritage significance. Key to its significance is its iconic status in New South Wales and Australian history. As members will know, Centennial Park was created specifically to commemorate the 100th anniversary of European settlement in the colony, and 13 years later it was chosen as the site of the ceremony of the inauguration of the Federation of Australia. Much of what Centennial parklands covers today is what remains of the second Sydney Common, proclaimed in 1811 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie when he put aside 490 hectares of land.

Mr Gareth Ward: A visionary Governor.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Absolutely, he was a visionary Governor. In those days, 490 hectares of land was a significant allotment; Governor Macquarie showed great foresight by putting it aside for public benefit. However, what makes Centennial parklands such a popular and iconic place in our community today is how it has evolved and adapted to remain relevant to the wants and needs of our community, while not losing its distinctive Victorian era identity. The parklands play host to a diverse array of activities and events ranging from sport and recreational to educational, social and entertainment. As I stated earlier, it is estimated that more than 11 million visits were made to the parklands in 2010-11. The Government is committed to strengthening the local environment and communities, and cutting red tape. This bill contributes to these goals by improving the administrative efficiency of the trust and providing it with greater opportunities to seek enhanced revenue. A stronger financial position for the trust will ensure the long-term management and maintenance of the parklands for the whole community.

Many people will be surprised to hear that the trust is largely self-funded. It is to be congratulated on having more than 93 per cent of its recurrent budget of \$20 million derived

from its commercial activities that include Moore Park Golf House, community events, and more than 40 licences and leases for entities such as Fox Studios Australia, the Entertainment Quarter and Centennial Parklands Dining. The first proposal in this bill is to extend the maximum term of a lease into the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust can enter from a maximum of 20 years to a maximum of 50 years. The bill will also allow a maximum lease term up to 99 years if the Minister approves. These are commercial lease arrangements—the amended maximum lease durations are similar to those in comparable Acts—that will enable the trust to enter into longer-term leases that will improve the commercial viability of private sector investment in the parklands. It is fitting that it is the Liberal-Nationals Government taking this step, recognising the necessity for strong, commercial lease operations and administration.

The ability for the trust to attract private funding is particularly important for the refurbishment of ageing assets, such as the E. S. Marks Athletics Field and the Moore Park Golf House, that require substantial investments to bring them to acceptable standards of safety and amenity. These investments could have been made over the past 16 years, but they were not. They face quite substantial financial input to bring them to a standard necessary for today's safety and public enjoyment. Without such funding, ongoing deterioration of these assets may lead to partial or full closure of facilities to the public. I am sure no member in the House or the public would want that to happen.

The second proposal contained in this bill will enable the trust to delegate its functions to State or local government agencies, as well as to persons of a class prescribed by the regulations. A delegate will now be able to sub-delegate to authorised persons if the delegate is authorised to do so by the trust. This will improve the ability of the trust to provide safe and secure parklands. A number of additional amendments in the bill will indemnify trustees against compensation claims, bring all landholdings into a single schedule, allow written resolutions of the trustees outside of a meeting and remove redundant provisions in the Act. The Act is currently silent on indemnity for trustees.

This bill introduces an indemnity provision so that trustees are not personally liable for compensation claims arising from injuries and damage to property incurred within the trust lands. The remaining parts of the bill cut red tape, which is a significant step by our Government, by bringing all the landholdings together in a single schedule and omitting redundant clauses. This bill will improve the operational efficiency of the trust so that it can continue to provide the community with a safe and attractive environment to enjoy. I wholeheartedly support these amendments. They will do a great deal towards assisting the trust with its financial viability, making sure that facilities offered within the parklands are up to the standard we expect today and continue the legacy that Governor Macquarie saw initially by handing over this land for public use. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Ryan Park and set down as an order of the day for a future day.