

**NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(RESERVATIONS) BILL 2011**

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**Second Reading**

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA** (Parliamentary Secretary) [4.47 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Greg Pearce: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The National Parks and Wildlife Legislation Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011 proposes some small but important changes to two pieces of State legislation: the National Parks and Wildlife Act of 1974 and the National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress) Reservations Act of 2010. These important amendments will lead to good outcomes for the people of New South Wales—each one of them balances protection of our State's environment with the need to support our economic growth and State prosperity. The first proposal in the bill will see the creation of Wianamatta Nature Reserve—a site with important and unique ecological values in western Sydney.

The second proposal contained in the bill extends the time frame for a final timber harvest of the Yathong and Wilbertroy State Forests—without conservation losses—before these areas are transferred to the national parks system as scheduled. We are also seeking to correct a boundary error that occurred when Ash Island was added to Hunter Wetlands National Park in 2009, excising about 18.5 hectares from the park. This land is zoned for industrial use and was never intended to be included in the reserve. Its revocation will facilitate the expansion of an important coal loading terminal, should that project receive planning approval. Finally, the passing of the bill would also see the separate addition of approximately 22 hectares of high conservation value land added to the Hunter Wetlands National Park.

First, let me say that this bill delivers on the Government's pre-election environment commitment to establish Wianamatta Nature Reserve at Cranebrook, which is located 45 kilometres west of the Sydney central business district, giving the highest level of protection to a site of rare natural and cultural values. Protection for the lands at Cranebrook is what the local community wants. They have lobbied for it for many years, and this Government intends to deliver that protection. This unique site of approximately 181 hectares was formerly owned by Airservices Australia. It has a long history of a range of uses, including as a former telecommunications site. Public access has been uncontrolled for many years, leading to degradation of some of the site's environmental values by trail bikes, rubbish dumping and weed invasion. However, many of the site's biodiversity and cultural values remain. This Government has pledged to step in and put a halt to the degradation.

The site has significant Aboriginal heritage values, including known archaeological sites. Those sites should be preserved as part of our State's history for future generations to learn from. The land is also home to seven threatened plant species, 23 threatened animal species and 10 per cent of the remaining area of the endangered Castlereagh Swamp Woodland. The lands were added to Wianamatta Regional Park earlier this year. However, the protection offered by a regional park does not go far enough for this very special site. This bill will give the site the maximum environmental protection possible. Establishing the Wianamatta Nature Reserve will be much more than a change of reserve category. The Government has allocated \$1 million for the necessary remediation and land management actions that will address damage from past uses, deal with pests and weeds, and improve the site to a nature reserve standard.

The nature reserve will still provide opportunities for low-impact recreation that is sympathetic to the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the site. This will include the provision of trails for bushwalking. There will also be opportunities for the local community to participate in bushland restoration—giving ownership for the conservation of this site to the people who want to see its protection. Visitors who want to engage in more active pursuits, such as cycling and picnicking, will still have a wonderful, extensive regional park available for recreational use. The nearby Wianamatta Regional Park will contain 900 hectares of parkland—64 hectares are currently reserved, with 836 hectares soon to be added—and this bill does not change the status of that land.

The second important amendment in this bill is the extension of the time frame for a final timber harvest of Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests. Under existing legislation, logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests was scheduled to continue until 31 December this year. I emphasise that this logging is already provided for and planned. However, delays to planned logging operations have been caused by an unprecedented wet season and problems accessing these remote areas in the time frames allowed. This bill extends the time to get the job done. Logging in these areas will comply with the same strict standards applied across the region's State forests. No additional area of State forest will be logged. The commitment to transfer those areas to the national park estate will remain enshrined in legislation.

This bill extends the time for harvesting Yathong State Forest by three years. This extension would mean that the State forest is included in the Yathong Nature Reserve on 1 January 2015. The bill also extends the time for harvesting Wilbertroy State Forest. A shorter extension of two years will see this area join the Lachlan Valley National Park on 1 January 2014. These changes will deliver good results for the local communities and economies that rely on sustainable use of resources in the area, with very little impact on our reserve system. This bill will correct a boundary error in the Hunter Wetlands National Park located along the Hunter River estuary near Hexham. Last year the Newcastle Ports Corporation transferred an area known as Ash Island to the State Government. The area was added to the Hunter Wetlands National Park prior to this Government taking office. Ash Island is the western edge of a larger island known as Kooragang Island.

Port Waratah Coal Services operate Kooragang coal terminal on 255 hectares of Kooragang Island. The reservation of Ash Island inadvertently included a 50-metre wide strip of land that is zoned for port-related activities. The area totals approximately 18.5 hectares. Port Waratah Coal Services is now proposing an expansion of terminal four at the Kooragang Coal Terminal to meet its export obligations and the 50-metre wide strip of land is needed for terminal railway lines. With this expansion, the capacity of terminal four could be increased by between 60 million and 100 million tonnes per annum. This will represent a significant outcome for the New South Wales economy and for regional jobs. I make it clear that the land will not be transferred unless it receives State and Federal planning approval. Planning approval will consider and manage potential impacts on threatened species and migratory bird habitats, and will include a requirement for conservation land offsets.

I turn now to the fourth, and final, amendment in this bill—the addition of approximately 22 hectares of important wetlands to the Hunter Wetlands National Park. This addition provides an important buffer between the existing national park boundary and an adjacent industrial area. The land is a freshwater-estuarine mosaic that is part of the Tomago wetlands and is adjacent to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site. We are very pleased to welcome this land to the national park system. As outlined in this Chamber today, the bill provides sensible

amendments to State legislation that balance the importance of preserving high-value conservation lands with the need for ensuring our State's economic growth and development.