

### Agreement in Principle

**Ms VERITY FIRTH** (Balmain—Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Minister for Women, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)) [5.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

This bill proposes the revocation of a small area of land from Leacock Regional Park, which is located at Casula in south-west Sydney. The revocation is to allow for the construction of the Southern Sydney Freight Line. From time to time circumstances arise that require the revocation of lands reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974. To achieve this, and to ensure that conservation outcomes remain a priority, lands reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act may not be revoked except by an Act of Parliament. The revocation of lands will generally be undertaken as an avenue of last resort and only where appropriate.

The Australian Rail Track Corporation, which is a Commonwealth Government-owned company, and RailCorp have entered into a joint arrangement for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Southern Sydney Freight Line. The Southern Sydney Freight Line is to be a single bidirectional non-electrified dedicated freight line for a distance of 30 kilometres between Macarthur and Sefton in south Sydney. The capital value of the project is estimated to be in excess of \$190 million.

The key objective of the Southern Sydney Freight Line is to enable freight and passenger trains to run independently and to increase the reliability and efficiency of freight and passenger train operations. The Southern Sydney Freight Line will be managed by the Australian Rail Track Corporation while RailCorp will continue to own the corridor. The design of the southern and northern approach ramps to accommodate a proposed Glenfield flyover and the grade and curvature limitations of the railway track have resulted in design constraints and the requirement for acquisition and de-gazettement of a small portion of Leacock Regional Park to accommodate the proposed route of the Southern Sydney Freight Line.

The project was assessed under part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 with an environmental assessment report prepared and publicly exhibited in May and June 2006. The Minister for Planning approved the construction of the Southern Sydney Freight Line in December 2006. The Southern Sydney Freight Line is to be completed in 2009. The proposed revocation is required because the construction of a freight line is not permissible on land reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. This development requires the revocation of 1,564 square metres of land from Leacock Regional Park.

Leacock Regional Park was reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 in September 1997 and there was a small addition to the park in 2001. Leacock Regional Park is situated within a region where there is high demand for recreational areas for activities such as walking, bicycle riding and picnics. The park, in combination with other protected areas in the Sydney Basin, forms an important refuge area for native animals. It also protects an important range of vegetation communities that have largely been cleared elsewhere in the Sydney Basin. The proposed revocation represents a small area of the park—less than 0.5 per cent of the total area of about 34.3 hectares—and the land to be revoked does not have any significant natural and cultural heritage values. Compensation will be determined by the Valuer General and will be used to purchase compensatory land.

This bill is a positive one for the people of New South Wales as it will allow for the construction of the Southern Sydney Freight Line, which will provide for reliable and efficient freight train operations through the southern Sydney metropolitan area without affecting passenger rail services. While a small area of land will be lost from the reserve system, the compensation paid will be used to purchase compensatory land in the vicinity of Leacock Regional Park where this is appropriate for park management purposes and consistent with the objectives of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. This is a necessary and sensible bill, which benefits many sectors within the community. I commend this bill to the House.