



NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard

Governor General's Residence (Grant) Amendment Bill

Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday 8 November 2005.

Second Reading

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY (Menai—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.46 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Morris Iemma: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Earlier this year the Prime Minister wrote to the former Premier, at the request of the Governor General, seeking a relaxation of the restrictions on the use of Admiralty House. The Governor General has expressed concern that he is not able to respond favourably to requests to use Admiralty House because of the tight restrictions on its permitted use. Such requests have included approaches from charities wishing to use the premises for fundraising events, as well as requests from schools in remote areas of Australia wishing to visit Admiralty House. Currently, the use of Admiralty House is restricted by the Governor General's Residence (Grant) Act 1945 and the Crown Grant made pursuant to the Act. The Crown Grant provides that Admiralty House must be used exclusively as the Governor General's residence, and for no other purpose.

It provides that a breach of this condition will enable the New South Wales Governor to reclaim the land from the Commonwealth on behalf of the State of New South Wales. To relax these restrictions, the Governor General has proposed that the principal Act be amended to permit Admiralty House to be used primarily, rather than exclusively, as the Governor General's premises. After close consideration of the Governor General's proposal, the New South Wales Government has formed the view that it is in the public interest to relax the restrictions on the use of Admiralty House. Admiralty House is an important part of the heritage of both New South Wales and Australia and should be able to be used for select public purposes.

The bill implements the Governor General's proposal by enabling the Governor General to permit the use of the land for certain charitable, educational and other public purposes so long as it is primarily used as the Governor General's official residence in Sydney. By permitting Admiralty House to be used for these additional purposes, the Governor General will now be able to consent to charities using the premises for fundraising events. It is anticipated that by being able to host their functions in such spectacular premises, charities could expect to raise more funds, benefiting worthy causes. Relaxing the current restrictions will also enable the Governor General to consent to visits by school groups wanting to learn more about the role of the Governor General.

By limiting the permitted uses to charitable, educational and other public purposes, and by providing that any such use is at the Governor General's discretion, the bill will ensure that the integrity of Admiralty House is not undermined. For constitutional reasons, the bill will be given effect through an agreement between the State and Commonwealth that will amend the Crown grant. The Commonwealth has been consulted and supports both the bill and the proposed agreement. The bill provides the Governor General with the discretion to permit the use of Admiralty House for public purposes that will benefit the community. I commend the bill to the House.