



Legislative Assembly

Save Callan Park Bill Hansard

Extract

19/09/2002

Second Reading

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [10.03 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Coalition is committed to protecting public lands across the State. Callan Park is one of several sites around Sydney Harbour that the Government intends to sell, and the Coalition is absolutely committed to preserving Callan Park. This bill enshrines our intentions at law. A number of people have been forthright in their opposition to the selling off of portions of Callan Park, including Michelle McKenzie, Jean Lennane and Hall Greenland who are present in the gallery today. They have been vociferous in making their views known and in ensuring that the needs of the communities around Rozelle Hospital and Callan Park are preserved and that Callan Park is not sold off.

The Save Callan Park Bill will preserve Callan Park in public ownership and will ensure that no part of it will be sold or used for residential purposes. The Opposition will carry that commitment into the coming election and beyond. Anyone who lives in Sydney knows that foreshore lands characterise Sydney Harbour. Yet in recent years the Government has demonstrated its intention to compromise what has been preserved for future generations, not only Callan Park, but also the Hunters Hill High School site, the Quarantine Station and the hoax perpetrated on the residents of Balmain concerning Ballast Point. The Government simply wants to sell off land to make a buck, it does not care about communities, it does not have a long-term view, and it does not have a long-term vision for future generations.

The Government is arrogant and has not listened to the people. The Opposition has listened to the community and believes that it is important to retain significant public lands in public ownership, and that is completely in contrast to the Government's views. Currently part of the site is parkland and is used by the community of the inner west and it should be preserved for that use. In the densely populated part of Sydney around Roseville and the Port Jackson electorate, overseen by the Drummoyne electorate, this land forms part of the crucial backyard for local residents. None of it should be sold off, yet that is the Government's intention. However, this bill will prevent that sell off. Whilst the Government does not intend to sell off all the land, most of the proposed sell off is around the perimeter of the park.

That sell off, with up to four-storey developments, will deny access and vision to the current parkland. The Government has claimed that it is giving the people of the inner west the parkland that is already theirs. The question is whether any part of the land should be taken away, and the answer is no. The proposed development will break the tree canopy over Callan Park and Rozelle. The current ambulance headquarters site partially breaches the tree canopy, but that canopy will be extensively breached by the development as it goes through the tree canopy at that site, and the development will be visible from anywhere in the region. The characteristics of that part of the foreshore near Rozelle will be irreversibly lost.

It is absolutely outrageous and unbelievable that as part of the plan for Callan Park, State environmental planning policy [SEPP] 56, which preserves the Sydney Harbour foreshores by ensuring that there is no inappropriate development, has been completely compromised to enable the Government to sell off the land. This breach is another demonstration of the Government's lack of commitment to SEPP 56. These lands should be kept fully in public hands. Ironically, Broughton Hall was originally private land, which was bequeathed to the community in 1916 to be used by returned servicemen from World War I, and it was the day before National Legacy Day that submissions for its future closed. The Government wants to carve off large chunks of the land that was bequeathed to the people. This is an important piece of land. It includes, amongst other things, Aboriginal and European cultural heritage sites, mental health facilities, drug and alcohol support services, the Sydney College of the Arts, the Sydney Writers Centre and a central public open space for densely populated Balmain, Roseville and the inner west.

This is a significant issue for people in the Drummoyne and Port Jackson electorates. The Government has not listened to the community. Rallies and public meetings have been held. Thousands upon thousands of people have taken to the streets and they have protested at Balmain Town Hall and at other meetings. The Minister for Planning, the Minister for Tourism, who ironically is the local member for Port Jackson, and the Premier have not listened—they do not want to listen—to the pleas of the community to preserve this land.

The honourable member for Port Jackson, hand in glove with Planning NSW, has wasted tens of thousands of dollars trying to defend the indefensible. She has wasted money on glossy brochures to preserve her position and to preserve her hide. She is trying to argue that it is acceptable if a little less than 80,000 square metres of this 67-hectare site is sold off. A 20 per cent reduction of 80,000 square metres to 64,000 square metres does not change the fact that a large portion of public parkland on Sydney's foreshore will be lost for all time.

The message that residents are sending to the honourable member for Port Jackson is that none of this land should be sold. The Callan Park master plan, which is a deceptive and tricky document, is a hoax. This Government is trying to sell to that community land that is unsaleable and unpalatable. The Government's master plan compromises passive open space. Proposed high-rise developments will overlook parkland and the oriental garden. People will not be able to enjoy the peace and solitude that they enjoy today with hundreds of residents looking out over those areas. Effectively, that parkland will become a private area. Worse still, plans that have been promoted by the Government and by the Minister for Planning include private courtyards in that open space.

The proposed development provides for no extra infrastructure to assist the thousands of people who will eventually live there. Under a Coalition government no land at Callan Park will be sold off; it will all be preserved. A Coalition government will preserve Rozelle hospital. It will be redeveloped on the Callan Park site as a centre of excellence for mental health—an \$80 million per annum recurrent commitment to people who need those services. Callan Park is an ideal location for those services. The community agrees that those services should remain, but the Government ignores the facts and it has not in any respect matched the Coalition's commitment. The Government simply wants to carve off a section of Callan Park for financial purposes. In August 1997 the Premier made a number of comments in relation to the Sydney Harbour foreshore. He said:

The Harbour is too precious to be sold off for the exclusive use of Sydney's silvertails.

What is the Premier doing? He is selling off land that belongs to everyone. The Sydney Harbour foreshore belongs to residents of Rozelle and surrounding regions, to residents of Sydney and to all of us. In August 1997 the Premier recognised that that land was too precious to be sold off, but today he wants to sell off that land. The Premier also said:

It has been enlightened government decision making based on a long term perspective rather than short term expediency that has preserved the current green belt of public space around the foreshores of Sydney Harbour and maintained public access to and around the harbour.

I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Premier. Anyone who knows Callan Park would agree with those sentiments. However, despite the Premier's supposed commitment, he wishes to sell off a portion of Callan Park. The Premier also stated:

Just as important decisions were taken in the public interest at the beginning of the century—

that is, around the early 1900s—

regarding Harbour foreshore lands, so important decisions must be taken in the public interest now.

We are at the beginning of a new century. It is just as important now as it was 100 years ago. It is in the public interest that Sydney Harbour foreshore lands are protected and preserved. Honourable members have an important decision to make in relation to this bill, that is, to preserve the foreshore lands of Sydney Harbour. If the Government's proposals in relation to Callan Park and Hunters Hill are implemented and the quarantine station is leased in the long term we will have sacrificed for eternity what has been given to us by our forefathers. There is no excuse for that.

A Coalition government is committed to preserving all those sites in public ownership. This bill will ensure that Callan Park stays in public ownership for future generations. It will be unable to be sold and it will be unable to be used for residential development. It is our commitment to preserve and protect Callan Park for eternity. Our commitment to the residents of Rozelle is clear. Opposition members will pursue this issue over the next six months, during the period of the State election and beyond. We will preserve Callan Park in public ownership. If the Government does not support this bill that will send a strong message to the community of Rozelle and to other communities.

Opposition members will continue to pursue their campaign to preserve public foreshore lands. What is the position of the Premier and the Government in relation to protecting foreshore lands? The position of the Opposition is clear. All the sites that I mentioned earlier, including Callan Park, will be preserved. I challenge the Government, the Premier and every Government member to support this bill. They should preserve Callan Park, and put their money where their mouths are. The words that they have spoken will ring hollow if they do not support this proposal. I encourage all honourable members to support this bill. I say clearly to the community that, under a Coalition government, Callan Park will be preserved in public ownership for eternity.