

The State Election

With the State Election sprung upon us by an anxious Premier, our thoughts turn to the State seat of Fremantle, held for so long by Jim McGinty for the ALP. The Fremantle Society has a tradition of remaining neutral in elections at this level, so I can't recommend a particular candidate as deserving of your vote.

But I will make to following observations that you may like to consider before voting on September 6th:

- The current State government has foisted many inappropriate and environmentally damaging developments on Fremantle in the past few years, South Beach and Coogee to name but two. The ING development is top of the latest list. Our opposition to this development -- and the hundreds of public submissions we encouraged -- were overlooked by the WAPC and disparaged by the Planning Minister. The Fremantle Society called on Jim McGinty to help articulate our position on the development to Government. While he listened, he did not appear to take our case forward with any enthusiasm. The final development outcome is little different from the original proposal. This is disappointing to many in the Fremantle community, including many traditional ALP voters.
- Closer to the election date, and where opposition to particular proposals has generated even more widespread community backlash, as in the Three Harbours Proposal, Jim McGinty has been more responsive and has called on the government to reconsider.
- The Government Heritage Minister, Michelle Roberts, has stood by and failed to act as the valuable South Fremantle Power Station has been de-listed. She has expressed the opinion that the building does not 'deserve' to be re-listed. This leaves the building open to demolition; whatever other plans the State comes up with for its restoration.
- It is often said that the voters of Fremantle would get a far better deal if the seat were not as safe as it is - in the scheme of things marginal seats get a far more sympathetic ear from Government.

Ian Alexander
President.

VICTORIA QUAY ABSURDITY

Members will be aware that in September 2005 the Fremantle Society nominated Victoria Quay and the inner harbour of Fremantle for national heritage listing, providing all the necessary documentation to support our nomination. The nomination was duly acknowledged and Victoria Quay and the Inner Harbour were entered on the Australian Heritage Database as a 'Nominated Place' and the matter was referred to the Chair of the Australian Heritage Council for assessment.

Normally such an assessment is required to be finalised within twelve months, but provision is made in the Act for a further twelve month extension if this is considered necessary. In July 2006 the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Ian Campbell, wrote to the Society advising that an extension had been granted for further consultation and assessment.

However, in May this year we were advised that our nomination had lapsed because 'it had been excluded from two consecutive work plans.' When we queried on what grounds it had been allowed to lapse, we were informed that the Australian Heritage Commission had decided not to include it in the 2008-2009 Priority Assessment List because it was considered that Victoria Quay and the Inner Harbour were unlikely to have any national heritage value and was unlikely to meet any of the requirements for listing.

This statement completely contradicts the advice we were given by heritage experts and consultants, including members of the Heritage Council of WA, that Victoria Quay at least met most of the requirements under the new Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation act 1999 for national heritage listing.

The Society does not intend to tamely accept this absurd decision, and will continue to try to find ways to have the area listed on the national register!

or

How the developers ate the ocean.

The construction of artificial islands is not a new idea, but the Six Islands' 'Northport Quay' proposal brings a new sort of madness to Perth's 'develop-at-all-costs' tendency. If it ever goes ahead, it will only benefit a few, and threatens an environmental disaster in the seas off Fremantle.

To many, including me, the idea is little short of crazy. It is not as if we are short of land to develop, so why fill in and develop the ocean? But as historians have noted, WA's history is littered with examples of grand and unlikely schemes designed for the profit and aggrandizement of their promoters rather than for benefit of the citizenry.

The spin-doctors and lobbyists are already hard at work trying to convince a skeptical public that the idea is widely supported, and that those who oppose it are just 'naysayers' and knockers.

But as I see it, there are many cogent reasons why the Fremantle Society should oppose this development. Many of these points were raised by speakers at a recent rally against the proposal in Fremantle, organized by committee member Adele Carles, (who is also running as a candidate for Fremantle in the State election):

- The developers seek to privatise the seabed, a la Coogee, a resource that should remain in the public domain. The price the developers are offering to pay for the land is bargain basement. Should they have to pay equivalent 'market' land price for the seabed, their proposal is unlikely to be on the table.
- The proposal, to build a 'mini-city' in the ocean housing up to 20000 people behind massive sea walls, is environmental vandalism, given rising sea levels and winter storms of increasing intensity.

- The proposal is bound to be elitist and is largely aimed at boat-owners, despite the unlikely claim that Homeswest will be involved. With an up-market clientele, the 'car free' notion is pie in the sky.

The proposal includes high-rise residential and hotels of over 30 storeys: these are massive and in clear breach of State policies that are supposed to limit coastal building height to 5-8 stories

There is little likelihood that the development can be carbon-neutral as claimed, particularly given the energy costs of building the islands and that of boats etc. Solar power/wind etc should be mandatory in all new developments so its inclusion in NQ is just a bit of 'greenwash'. A real wind farm off Rous Head would be a much more environmentally beneficial than Northport Quay.

the amenity of beaches at Port and Leighton via boat traffic, noise and pollution, visual intrusion etc

The proposal is outside the Government's metro planning blueprint "Network City", which while it may not be ideal, advocates intense

development of land along existing transport corridors, and certainly not the creation of new cities in the ocean.

There is a great deal of existing land near Fremantle that can be developed e.g. the Cockburn area around the old Power Station, where DPI is currently proposing additional housing for over 10000 (although there may be less if the amount of high-rise proposed there is reduced). That is where there should be a rail service connecting to Fremantle: the DPI simply proposes bus transit connection

Northport Quay will undoubtedly involve a massive public subsidy to the developers in the land, services, infrastructure etc

Ian Alexander

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