

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 30 November 2007

MALABAR HEADLAND

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.36 p.m.]: Today I again raise the issue of Malabar Headland. I referred to it in my inaugural speech and during private members' statements on 6 April 2006 and 10 May 2007. Malabar Headland is an area in my electorate located between Maroubra and Malabar that is one of the largest and best areas of quality bushland left in the eastern suburbs. It covers 177 hectares of headland, and since 1907 has been used as a rifle range. Malabar Headland is recognised as an area of national significance, and the eastern and western sections of the headland are listed on the register of the National Estate and the New South Wales heritage register. It contains many bird and animal species, Aboriginal engravings, middens, burial sites of the Dharug-speaking Aboriginal people who used to inhabit the area, and significant World War II coastal defence historical sites, including forts, gun emplacements, underground defence facilities and a sunken munitions railway. All these items are abandoned and ruinous.

The position of the local Labor representatives at Federal, State and local government levels—indeed, councillors of all political persuasions on Randwick City Council are unanimous in their views—is that the rifle range activities currently conducted on the site must be relocated. We have consulted the shooters involved and secured their agreement in the matter. We believe the site should become public open space and a national park. This has been my longstanding position and it is the position held by my political predecessor in the seat of Maroubra, former Premier Bob Carr, Laurie Brereton and the new Federal Minister for Environment, Heritage and Arts, and member for Kingsford Smith, Peter Garrett. I take this opportunity to congratulate Peter Garrett on his re-election as member for Kingsford Smith—with an increased margin—on Saturday last and on his ascension yesterday to the post of Federal environment Minister.

The problem is that the Commonwealth Government's position with regard to the headland has been inconsistent over the years.

In 1998 John Fahey, the Commonwealth Minister for Finance, announced that \$9 million had been set aside in the Commonwealth Federation Fund to relocate the shooters, to provide open space on the headland and to hand that land over to the people of my electorate and the State.

Following that former Premier Bob Carr announced that a new site had been located for the shooters because they required a range of about 1,000 metres for the Queen's Shoot. However, since 1998 the Commonwealth position has remained inconsistent. The Minister responsible for the headland, Gary Nairn, recently sent letters to various parties saying that the Commonwealth believed that the shooters should be allowed to

remain on the headland indefinitely and that he was in the process of negotiating a new licence agreement. I understand that that licence has not been executed. The election of the Rudd Government on Saturday changes the situation with regard to the headland. As I said, the New South Wales Government's position and now the Federal Government's position is likely to be that the shooters be relocated and that the headland be handed over.

How do we progress this now? Firstly, we should acknowledge that the shooters conduct themselves legitimately and that their activities on the headland for a century or more have resulted in its being so well preserved: the fact that people cannot walk across it means that the bushland has been preserved. If it were not for the fact that shooters have been using the area there would probably be home units all over the site. I have spoken to the Hon. Robert Brown from the Shooters Party, who eloquently makes the case for his members, and to Minister Tony Kelly this morning, who concurs with my position. The New South Wales Government and the new Federal Government should talk to the shooters and reassure them that we respect their activities and acknowledge that they need to negotiate in good faith and find a suitable alternative facility. After that we must find out what has happened to the \$9 million in the Federation Fund. I hope it is still there. We should expend those funds to take care of the shooters and to give them guaranteed tenure and security—they certainly do not have it now. We should then hand over the headland as open space, and possibly a national park.

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