

Legislative Council

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TORRENS ISLAND

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (15:22): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the minister representing the Treasurer a question on the proposed development of Torrens Island.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: As members will recall, some months ago I moved a motion calling on the government to abandon its plans to further industrially develop Torrens Island and instead take steps to preserve its significant environmental and heritage value. Unfortunately, both Labor and Liberal parties revealed themselves to be pro-development, regardless of the cost, and rejected that motion. As a result I was fully expecting the South Australian Government Financing Authority to proceed with the application to the Development Assessment Commission for subdivision, which I might add had been requested by the Treasurer to be put on hold until the motion had gone to a vote.

For this reason it was to my surprise last week to learn that the Treasurer had instructed the South Australian Government Financing Authority to withdraw the application for subdivision. I was further surprised to learn that a recommendation had been made to transfer ministerial responsibility for Torrens Island to the Minister for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure. The advice I have received is that the transfer of ministerial responsibility would not have precluded the continuation of the South Australian Government Financing Authority's application for subdivision, meaning that the government must have another motive for withdrawing the application.

While no official explanation has been given, it is my suspicion that the government this time, through the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, will soon reapply to the Development Assessment Commission for subdivision and also development approval under section 49 of the Development Act. As the previous application only related to subdivision, it was assumed that the proposed developers of each allotment would have to seek development approval and, as such, the environment and heritage impact of each development could be reviewed individually. If my suspicions are correct, however, these developments will now avoid the scrutiny applicable to private developments under the Development Act and consequently deny those who seek the preservation of the pristine coastal environment and heritage-listed quarantine station the right to object. My questions to the minister are:

1. Is it the government's intention to proceed with further industrial development of Torrens Island?
2. Why did the Treasurer give instructions to withdraw the application to subdivide Torrens Island?
3. Did the Treasurer give these instructions, knowing that the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure would be making fresh application to the Development Assessment Commission?
4. If so, is it the government's intention to reapply for both subdivision and development approval for Torrens Island? If so, why, and, if not, is it to avoid public scrutiny?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister Assisting the Premier in Public Sector Management) (15:25): As I understand it, the Treasurer is the local member for the area down there. I imagine he would feel a lot more comfortable in representing his constituents if the agencies that are making decisions down there were reporting to another minister so that he would be able to be involved in that. As for what the transfer means, I think the honourable member is reading a lot more into it than that, but I will seek—

The Hon. D.W. Ridgway interjecting:

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: For a start, the honourable member mentioned the station down there which is heritage listed. As it is on the state heritage list, that quarantine station is absolutely protected. If the suggestion is that, if there are to be any further proposals down there, they could avoid scrutiny, I do not see how transferring control from one minister to another is going to have any impact on that at all.

As I understand it, the only reason that the issue of Torrens Island was under the Treasurer was that it was part of the fallout from the sale of the electricity trust, where one of those corporations that was dealing with those assets that came with the sale of ETSA was incorporated into the Treasurer's portfolio. It certainly seems to me to make more sense that the Minister for Infrastructure would be the appropriate minister to be involved in the consideration of such issues.

As I said, it is probably just a historical accident that the Treasurer would be involved in these matters, because the land was owned by a corporation that was left over from the sale of the electricity trust 1½ decades ago. As I said, I think the honourable member might well be reading much more into this than is the case.

In relation to future plans for the area, I know for some time now there have been plans for an additional power station adjacent to the current location, but that was on cleared land. That is something that has been well known. Clearly, the future of Torrens Island is important. I will seek a response from the Minister for Infrastructure as to what current plans, if any, the government is considering in relation to the future of this land.