

**NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
(RESERVATIONS) BILL 2011**

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Bill introduced on motion by the Hon. Robyn Parker.

Agreement in Principle

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [10.59 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011 makes amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to achieve four positive outcomes for the people of New South Wales, each one balancing protection of our State's environment with the need to support our economic growth and prosperity. The Government is committed to national parks and to nature conservation in New South Wales. That is why creating Dharawal National Park was one of our headline commitments in our Protecting our Natural Environment election policy, in our 100 Day Action Plan and in our NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one. Also in our NSW 2021 plan was a commitment to continue the New South Wales reserve establishment program to create sensible and strategic additions to the national park network. Our green corridor plan will support that by building connections across the landscape in key locations through programs such as the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative.

This bill is about meeting the Government's commitment to national parks, especially through the upgrading of Wianamatta Regional Park at Cranebrook to a nature reserve. It is also about rectifying some administrative errors of the previous Government. Much of my job is taken up with legacy issues of the former Government—issues that it failed to deal with. When I became environment Minister a too-hard basket had been left by five environment Ministers and we are simply addressing a number of those legacy issues. The first proposal in this bill is an upgrade in protection for approximately 181 hectares of land currently included in Wianamatta Regional Park, which will create Wianamatta Nature Reserve. This commitment has been very well received in the area. When we make election commitments we deliver.

The second proposal contained in the bill extends the time frame under which logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests can be completed—without conservation losses—before these areas are transferred to the national parks reserve system. The third proposal will correct a boundary error that occurred when Ash Island was added to Hunter Wetlands National Park in 2009, excising about 18.5 hectares from the park so that an important coal-loading terminal can be expanded. The land is only 50 metres wide and it was intended for a rail track. The fourth proposal contained in the bill is the addition of approximately 22 hectares of high conservation value land to the Hunter Wetlands National Park.

The bill delivers on the Government's pre-election environment commitment to establish Wianamatta Nature Reserve at Cranebrook, some 45 kilometres west of the Sydney central business district. The bill will give the highest level of protection to a site of rare natural and

cultural values. Just prior to the St Marys community Cabinet I met with local stakeholders on the Cranebrook site. They told me of their joy at the site becoming a nature reserve and expressed their overwhelming appreciation for the \$1 million made available to repair the site to bring it up to standard. The member for Mulgoa, the member for Londonderry and the member for Penrith have all welcomed the news. I acknowledge that the member for Penrith is currently in the Chamber.

This unique site, totalling approximately 181 hectares, was formerly owned by Air Services Australia. It has a long history of a range of uses, including as a former telecommunications site. Public access has been uncontrolled for many years, leading to degradation of some of the site's environmental values by trail bikes, rubbish dumping and weed invasion. However, many of the site's biodiversity and cultural values have held on, and this Government has pledged to step in and put a halt to the degradation to preserve these important environmental and cultural assets for future generations.

The site contains seven threatened plant species, 23 threatened animal species and 10 per cent of the remaining area of the endangered Castlereagh swamp woodland. The site also has significant Aboriginal heritage values, including known archaeological sites. These need to be preserved for the benefit of future generations as they are part of our State's history. The lands were added to Wianamatta Regional Park earlier this year but the protection offered by a regional park does not go far enough for this very special site. This bill will give the site and its unique values the fullest environmental and cultural protection possible.

The bill also revokes approximately 181 hectares from the Wianamatta Regional Park and creates the Wianamatta Nature Reserve. This category of protection is the highest available under the State's National Parks and Wildlife Act—we are upgrading the section—and it is set aside for lands with special conservation significance. Establishing the Wianamatta Nature Reserve will be much more than a change of reserve category. In addition to re-categorising the reserve, the Government has committed \$1 million for necessary remediation and land management actions that will address damage from past land uses, will deal with pests and weeds and will improve the site to a nature reserve standard.

The nature reserve will still provide opportunities for low-impact recreation that is sympathetic to the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the site. That will likely include the provision of trails for bushwalking. There will also be opportunities for the local community to participate in bushland restoration. Visitors who want to engage in more active pursuits such as cycling and picnicking will still have a wonderful, extensive regional park available for recreational use. The nearby Wianamatta Regional Park will contain 900 hectares of parkland—64 hectares are currently reserved with 836 hectares soon to be added—and this bill does not change the status of that land. Preserving neighbouring biodiversity in Wianamatta Nature Reserve will only enhance the experience of visitors to the remaining Wianamatta Regional Park.

I now turn to the second important amendment in this bill: the extension of the time frame for

logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests before these areas are transferred to the national park estate. I heard that ABC radio ran a story this morning led by Henny Penny, the sky is falling shadow Minister for the Environment, Luke Foley, about this Government supposedly unwinding the south-western cypress national parks. I can inform the Parliament that Henny Penny Foley is wrong: the sky is not falling in; we are not unwinding those national parks. He should check his facts before he bolts outside for yet another attempt to politicise environmental issues. We are providing an extension of time for the exit cut in two State forests before they become national parks. Consultation in this regional forest process was rushed by the previous Labor Government and industry was not listened to. The amount of time provided for these exit cuts was not sufficient so we are providing a small extension. Not one extra log above what was agreed in the forest process will be taken. Not one less hectare of national park will be revoked. I repeat: Not one extra log will be taken.

The sky is not falling; we are simply allowing for extra time. Considering the incredible rains this year it is only reasonable we do so. We believe in working with the community and industry and getting environmental gains through consultation, not by ramming things through. This arrangement was made during the time of the former Government, and it was scheduled to continue until 31 December this year. Delays to the planned logging operations have been caused by the wet season and problems in accessing remote areas. Extending the time is sensible and allows the job to be done before the area is drawn into the national park. Logging will comply with the same strict standards applied across the region's State forests. No additional area of State forest will be logged, and the commitment to transfer these areas to the national parks estate will remain enshrined in legislation. The bill extends the time for harvesting in Yathong State Forest to 1 January 2015. The bill also extends the time for harvesting in Wilbertroy State Forest until 1 January 2014. These changes will deliver good results for the local communities and economies, with very little impact on our reserve system.

I now turn to the third important amendment in this bill: the correction of a boundary error in Hunter Wetlands National Park, located along the Hunter River estuary near Hexham. The former Government could not even get its mapping right. A fault in the process gazetted a national park right next to an internationally significant port—it could not draw lines properly on the map. This is what happens when there is no consultation between departments and things are rushed through. In May last year the Newcastle Ports Corporation transferred an area known as Ash Island to the State Government and the area was added to the Hunter Wetlands National Park in February this year.

Ash Island was a welcome addition to the State's reserve system because it contains the last remaining green and golden bell frog habitat in the Newcastle area and also because it contains important habitat for migratory birds. Ash Island is to the west of a larger island known as Kooragang Island, which comprises reclaimed land and a number of small islands. Port Waratah Coal Services operates a coal terminal on 255 hectares of Kooragang Island. The reservation of Ash Island by the previous Government inadvertently included a 50-metre wide strip of land that is zoned for port-related activities under the Three Ports State

Significant Site Proposal. The area covers about 18.5 hectares. Port Waratah Coal Services is proposing to expand terminal number four at Kooragang and the 50-metre wide strip of land is required for railway lines leading to a coal stockpile area. With this expansion the capacity of terminal number four could be increased by between 60 million and 100 million tonnes a year.

I make it clear that the land will not be transferred from public ownership and possible future reservation unless it receives State and Federal planning approval. If that is received the approval should address potential impacts on the green and gold bell frog and migratory bird habitats and include a requirement for conservation land offsets. This bill corrects a boundary error to enable expansion of the coal terminal, which will facilitate employment and benefit the local and the State economy. This expansion is consistent with the area's zoning and it will fix yet another mistake or stuff up that is the legacy of the Labor Government.

The fourth amendment to the National Parks and Wildlife Act deals with a separate addition of about 22 hectares of wetlands to the Hunter Wetlands National Park. This is a perfect example of how this Government will be looking for smart and strategic additions to our national park network. This addition provides an important buffer between the existing national park boundary and a new 111-hectare industrial development. The land is a freshwater estuarine mosaic that is part of the Tomago wetlands and is adjacent to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site. The Government is very pleased to welcome this land to the national parks system. This bill provides sensible amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act that balance the importance of preserving high-value conservation lands against the need for economic growth and development of our wonderful State.

In conclusion, the bill is designed to deliver two things: this Government's election commitments and, I am proud to be able to deliver for the communities of western Sydney, and an upgrade to the Cranebrook site to become Wianamatta Nature Reserve. I am also happy to be able to fix some of the messes left by the former Government. This Government is seeking to provide an extension for the agreed exit cut for two State forests. As I said, no extra logs will be taken. The Government is committed to protecting our natural environment and providing full consultation with our communities on the decisions that affect them. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Ryan Park and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.