

POULTRY FARM PLANNING GUIDELINES

Grievance

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [9.18 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Planning about the planning legislation for poultry farms and issues that are emerging throughout the suburbs, particularly in my electorate, and is in two parts. Firstly, I ask for stronger planning guidelines and assistance for the relocation of poultry farms and, secondly, I refer to a specific proposal currently before the City of Swan, which has not yet reached the minister's desk but ultimately will.

The first issue I want to raise relates to existing poultry farms, as development grows throughout our suburbs, particularly in our outer suburbs. It is a very difficult policy area, as are many of these sorts of issues. Clearly, in my electorate, which is undergoing significant redevelopment—including the Swan urban growth corridor—the issues are significant for both existing residential properties and future developments next to poultry farms. I have had personal dealings with local homeowners about the location of four poultry farms located either in or just outside the boundaries of my electorate. All come to me with the same issues; namely, the apparent expansion of these poultry farms, and that what was acceptable 20 years ago in terms of odours and other issues is now not okay. Another issue is the subdivision and massive redevelopment of the area. These residents are witnessing significant redevelopment and subdivisions very close to their properties, but they are trapped because of the buffer zones for poultry farms.

There is no easy answer because most people eat eggs and or chickens. However, I think the state government needs to institute stronger and more proactive policy in conjunction with local councils to try to create precincts far away from existing landowners and their residences, and far away from proposed subdivisions. Instituting more proactive policy will both assist poultry farm owners and give security in the future for landowners, thereby ensuring they will be able to live without the problems that can emerge when living next to a poultry farm. It will also give these landowners the flexibility enjoyed by other landowners in the area to develop their land. I have gone over the Western Australian Planning Commission's "Statement of Planning Policy No. 4.3: Poultry Farms Policy". Although it provides some pretty good applications guidance, it is not prescriptive enough—that may be one way to describe it—or proactive enough. I really believe we need to seriously consider establishing precincts to ensure security for both poultry farm owners and nearby landowners.

Today, I wish to flag for the minister a particularly significant issue for my electorate, recently advertised by the local council—namely, a State Administrative Tribunal-directed request to allow the expansion of a poultry farm in the West Swan West area of the Swan urban growth corridor. As the minister knows, the Swan urban growth corridor has determined four areas for proposed residential redevelopment—Albion, Caversham, West Swan East and West Swan West. The latter contains a poultry farm. The owners, directed by SAT, have approached the local council for retrospective approval of a number of structures on their land and for the expansion of their poultry farm from 24 000 chickens to 80 000 chickens. That application has caused significant community unrest. Firstly, a number of local homeowners tell me that they believe this chicken farm has been operating well above the 24 000-bird limit for a number of years—a belief that seems to be backed up by some information we have obtained from the council. However, the real issue is the proposal to expand an existing poultry farm in the Swan urban growth corridor on land that is zoned "urban deferred" by the metropolitan region scheme and that is also identified as an area of significant residential redevelopment in upcoming years, as defined by the Swan urban growth corridor.

I would like the minister to clarify government policy for situations in which the land is not zoned rural but urban deferred and has been earmarked in a state government structure plan—the Swan urban growth plan—for residential development. I refer briefly to the WAPC's "Statement of Planning Policy No. 4.3" which states —

- 5.2.1 Applications to expand existing poultry farms located in a rural zone which is not identified for short or medium-term urban or rural-residential development may be permitted.

The case I refer to is different because the land is zoned urban deferred and has been earmarked for residential development in the next few years. I have gone over the policy guidelines and cannot find exactly where this case fits. I want the minister to clarify what he believes is the best way to treat these applications—in particular our response to the council. Moreover, I want the minister to identify what the government will do to proactively secure the future for poultry farm owners and their neighbours.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Planning) [9.25 am]: I was not given details of the specifics but more the general aspect of the member for West Swan's grievance today. I will therefore mainly make comments on the general issue. I will make a comment in relation to the specific issue, but I will obviously need further information about what is proposed.

As the member has indicated, “Statement of Planning Policy No. 4.3” entitled “Poultry farms Policy” deals with the difficult issue of balancing competing needs, which in this case is the prospect of urban development in an area against the needs of poultry farms that have, in most cases, been operating for a number of years prior to the urban development.

“Statement of Planning Policy No. 4.3” states —

This policy is to guide the Western Australian Planning Commission and local governments in determining rezoning, subdivision and development applications for poultry farms. The policy also sets out the process and matters to be taken into account in dealing with residential and other forms of development in the vicinity of poultry farms.

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The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure that new poultry farms are established in locations suitable to their operational requirements;
- To minimise the impact of poultry farms on residential, rural-residential and other potentially incompatible uses;
- To protect the interests of existing of poultry farms in the face of encroaching development; and
- To encourage the relocation of poultry farms on land required for residential or rural-residential development.

The member suggested the establishment of a precinct or precincts in which poultry farms can operate. To some extent that has been occurring with the relocation of some farms to rural areas not very far from the Perth central business district; albeit much further out than where urban encroachment is occurring. That relocation is assisted when land values increase as a result of urbanisation in the vicinity, and with land being rezoned urban. When that occurs, generally, an incentive or, at least implied assistance, is available.

Ms R. Saffioti: Do you think that government needs to do more because it is an issue that I think a number of members face in their electorates? It is not just a matter of waiting for those land values to increase and for poultry farm owners to make a decision. Maybe we need to be a bit more proactive to try to —

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is something that I think needs to be considered. I am sure the same issues were faced by the previous government; namely, the funding of these options and what is fair for the community on a wider basis. It is something on which I will seek further information to see what may be possible and whether any precincts have indeed been established. I think some poultry activity has been relocated from the Perth area to the Gingin area.

In relation to the specific issue in the Swan urban growth corridor and the West Swan West area, I have no prior knowledge about what is proposed for that area or about the proposed expansion of the existing poultry farm. The fact that there is urban encroachment around the area is obviously a major constraint to expansion of the poultry farm and something that very much needs to be taken into account. I would not want to make any judgement about what should happen without knowing more of the facts surrounding the issue or getting more advice. Clearly there is a major constraint. On the face of it, there appears to be a good argument as to why further expansion should not be permitted if urban development is likely to occur in the vicinity in the foreseeable future. That is my initial reaction, but, obviously, I would like to have more information before making any definitive judgement. Indeed, it will not be a judgement for me; it may well be a decision for the State Administrative Tribunal if an appeal goes there.

Ms R. Saffioti: SAT had to determine this because the council was applying some fines as they were operating over and above their current operating licence. SAT has asked council to determine it. The proposal has been advertised, but, ultimately, under the minister’s planning guidelines, it ends up at the commission anyway. All these decisions, as a result of this planning policy, have to go before the commission anyway.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I thank the member for that additional information. I will ensure that the Planning Commission is made aware of the concerns that have been raised here today and will ensure that the proposal is looked at very carefully. The whole planning system is about balancing competing needs. People have property rights of course. They need to be respected. There are people in this state who have very strong views about that. On the other hand, the prospect of urban development and allowing for urban growth needs to be provided for in a reasonable way. The various competing needs must be balanced. I will ensure the issues are looked at carefully. Hopefully, a wise and sensible decision will ultimately be made.

