



## CENTENNIAL PARK DEVELOPMENT

**Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) (19:22):** Earlier this year I brought to the attention of the House my concerns, and that of Centennial Park residents, around Carsingha Investments' unsolicited development proposal for a 99-year lease on the Entertainment Quarter at Moore Park. The suburb of Moore Park is part of the Centennial Parklands, which is a collection of green spaces that includes Centennial Park, Moore Park and Queens Park that was originally gifted to the people of New South Wales by Governor Macquarie. In the past I have called them the "lungs of Sydney", given the prevalence of medium- to high-density development surrounding parklands. Those green spaces are fast becoming important spaces for the health and wellbeing of people in the eastern suburbs and the inner city. They are an escape from the concrete and glass that surrounds them.

Carsingha Investments is a corporation partly owned by Gerry Harvey, John Singleton and Mark Carnegie. Their unsolicited proposal would see the Entertainment Quarter redeveloped into a commercial precinct, complete with a 20-storey tower and hotel. As I have outlined in the past, that would call into question the future of the Entertainment Quarter's State significant and world-class film, television and video production industry based at Fox Studios. I have referred to it as "Aussiewood", as during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic the facility hosted some of the biggest names in Hollywood who were in the country making billion-dollar blockbusters. From the Star Wars prequels to the latest Thor movie, the Entertainment Quarter has played a large part in the growth of the film and television industry in Australia. It has not only fostered on-screen talent but also created thousands of jobs behind the camera.

From camera persons to film editors and animators—many of whom would have had to travel overseas for work—can now express their creative outline in their own backyard, thanks to the vision of the Carr Government. During the recent COVID-19 lockdowns I am grateful to have been afforded a second briefing from the office of planning and public spaces. I thank the Minister for the courtesy. I was also briefed on the proposed legislative reforms impacting the future of the Centennial Parklands. I was provided insight on the now released exposure bill for the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust, which proposes to create a new statutory body to oversee the management of Centennial Parklands, Western Sydney Parklands, Parramatta Park, Callan Park and Fernhill Estates. Once created, the Greater Sydney Parklands Trust will oversee some 6,000 hectares of parkland across Sydney.

Whilst the exposure bill contains provisions about including community feedback in the future body's decision-making process, it essentially gives authority for the future trust body to enter into commercial arrangements that will alienate public green spaces for exclusive private use. While the exposure bill gives the Minister with carriage the final say on a lease or licence, I am concerned that the provisions of the Act will provide a backdoor method for the unsolicited proposal to occur. Under the current Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act, an extension of the lease for 99 years is not permitted. In my view, it is grossly improper to even consider alienating publicly owned land to one organisation for 99 years without going to public tender.

The proponents of the Carsingha proposal, knowing when the lease is to expire, have paid well beyond the value of the site in the Entertainment Quarter. They also have a keen understanding of the restrictions imposed on the site by the State environmental planning policy, which have been there since the Entertainment Quarter and Fox Studios came into existence. I am also clearly aware, as are a variety of stakeholders, that the current leaseholders of the Entertainment Quarter have deliberately run down the site and not sought to redevelop it and are using that as leverage to persuade the Government that their proposal is the only way that can generate Carsingha's unsolicited proposal. I do not for one second believe the proposed legislation is for the benefit of the residents of Centennial Park.

