



**YUMBARRA CONSERVATION PARK  
1 April 2003**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** The City of Adelaide is a long way from the Yellabinna Regional Reserve. Nevertheless, we have many instant experts on Yellabinna, including the member for Mitchell, who condemned exploration and mining in a small, specific section of an area that is as large as Victoria. What would be the response to the banning of all mining and mining exploration in the state of Victoria? The Yellabinna Regional Reserve, north-west of Ceduna, covers 4 million hectares, which is similar in size to Victoria. Within this large expanse is a much smaller area of 327 000 hectares called Yumbarra Conservation Park and, within this area, the even smaller section of 26 650 hectares that is the subject of discussion. We are talking about 0.65 per cent of the total area to be opened for investigation. The investigation has arisen from the aerial geomagnetic survey of the Gawler Craton which pinpointed possible mineral deposits. The size and content of the deposits must be evaluated before mining can be considered.

The Ceduna community was excited about the prospect of a mine development that would provide employment for locals, who could then continue to live in the area that they preferred, surrounded by the family supports that are so advantageous. In 1968 I visited Yumbarra and listened to the traditional owners of the land, the Wirangu, as they expressed their hopes and excitement at the prospect of a mine being developed. In 1999 the Chairman of the Wirangu Association, Mr Milton (Mitch) Dunnett wrote:

A high proportion of our people are unemployed with limited opportunities available locally for employment. This has resulted in a drift from our communities to other centres, separating our families and children. Exploration and mining will provide direct benefits into the local community and the state.

Mr Dunnett is one of our quiet achievers, of whom we are very proud.

Mr Hanna also quoted from a 1996 Wilderness Society Advisory Committee document in which was the statement that the land belonged to the Maralinga Tjarutja. Mr Hanna said 'These facts remain true.' The ownership 'fact' was never correct and caused a great deal of pain among our indigenous people.

In reply to the member for Mitchell in this house on 25 March last week, the Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Hon. John Hill, said that the park would be reclaimed if existing exploration proved fruitless and if the lease expired. The minister said:

Only one of these conditions has been met; that is, that the lease has expired, but the exploration has not proved fruitless. On the basis of that policy decision, we have no choice but to allow another application to be considered.

Ceduna Mayor Peter Duffy has asked the government to allow exploration that can determine whether there is viable mineralisation in the area under discussion. In a radio interview on 25 March last week, Mr Duffy said that stringent environmental conditions on the previous exploration licence made it almost impossible for the mining company to carry out the necessary work. He said:

The company did some very preliminary investigations. They were thwarted at every opportunity to go in and do real deep core drilling. In the end, after a lot of perseverance and negotiations, they gave up.

The group that would benefit most from a mining development in Yumbarra is the traditional owners of the land, the Wirangu, who support the development. They are a disadvantaged group in our society. They and I were excited at the possibility of employment, of the very real opportunity to live the type of lives that the member for Mitchell and metropolitan residents take for granted. I recall how the approval to carry out tests in a small selected section of Yumbarra was welcomed. I acknowledge with anger that those tests that are essential to determine whether a deposit is viable have been frustrated by bureaucrats and so-called conservation groups to such an extent that the lessees eventually surrendered their leases and asked that the new operators be given every assistance to ascertain the viability of the deposit.

Time expired.

## **YUMBARRA CONSERVATION PARK** **27 October 1999**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** Late last year I visited Yumbarra National Park with a group of people from Ceduna and Minister Rob Kerin to see for myself the area where the proposed mine would be. I knew from reading the report what to expect but I wanted to see the park and hear what the community representatives, council members and Wirangu Aboriginal leaders from the area had to say. There was a feeling of excitement and hope in everyone present as the possible future of the area was discussed and what it meant for the people who live in the region.

Although the park itself is not in my electorate, many of the jobs will be, and I felt that same feeling of excitement when I first saw the colour photograph showing the aerial survey. The anomaly that was the cause of all our speculation was shining bright red in an area of blue that was the rest of Eyre Peninsula. Here was the way of creating the number of jobs for the people of the region that would secure its future. For every job at the mine, it is expected there will be three to four more in the town of Ceduna and Eyre Peninsula to supply support services. If we add on the families who will arrive with the workers, it is quite possible to envisage a 3 000 increase in population, with even a modest size mine, and this one is expected to be big.

I did a business plan for Eyre Peninsula before I was elected to parliament in 1993 that showed that the survival of the towns on Eyre Peninsula depended very much on getting more jobs as quickly as possible. The traditional industries of sheep and grain have been cut to the bone with low prices and drought. Without these core jobs it would not take long before a town could not justify people remaining in many of the service industries and, when people such as teachers leave, families go with them. It is a vicious circle. Fortunately, the opposite is also true. However, it is often harder to get people back than it is to lose them.

I vowed at the time that I would not let another town on Eyre Peninsula die without a fight and I identified for towns the industries that I thought could be the source of their survival. With a coastline longer than Tasmania's, fishing and aquaculture were obvious, as were tourism and the retirement industries. The value adding of products and diversification within industries were all possibilities. The big unknown was the mining potential of the region, known to be part of the Gawler Craton geographic area. Gold, diamonds, coal, copper and even oil had been spoken of since I was a child growing up in the region. However, nothing significant had ever eventuated.

At the 1997 election, I became the member representing Ceduna and I saw for the first time the colour photograph of the anomaly. Along with many other people, I felt anger and frustration as obstruction has delayed the due process that has to be undertaken before we can even look at what is beneath the surface. We have not been able to verify that what was being shown on the survey was worth a second look. All the expense of the aerial surveys, all the expectation, yet an accident of fate denies us the ability of even finding out what is there.

Covering a huge 4 million hectare area of mostly sand dunes and desolate mallee scrub stretching as far as the eye can see is the Yellabinna Regional Reserve, similar in size to the state of Victoria. In this is a much smaller area of 327 000 hectares called Yumbarra Conservation Park in which there is an even smaller area of 26 650 hectares where, by that accident of fate, mining is not allowed. To me and to many others it is unbelievable that it is not a simple matter to work out some way that this 0.65 per cent of the total area cannot be opened for investigation and possible mining of an even smaller part of it. If it was located almost anywhere else in the reserve it could be mined.

As usual, most of the opposition comes from a small but very vocal section of the community. Some come from the Wilderness Society with its approximately 500 members, or 0.035 per cent of the state's population, and also from a small proportion of the Conservation Council, an umbrella organisation for 60 member groups that altogether represent about 4 per cent of the state's population and many of whom, I feel sure, would support this motion. In addition, to offset the very

small loss for those who consider this is such an important matter, the minister has offered Wahgunyah Conservation Reserve and a section of the Nullarbor National Park to be proclaimed to prevent mining.

An additional biological survey would be carried out that would be funded by the mining company before exploration and mining begins. Ongoing monitoring and rehabilitation of the area will also be required. I understand that funding from the mining operation would be made available to be put back into the better management of the parks. As one young person said to me, to oppose mining in the park would be unreasonable and unforgivable. We have to have balance and this does not mean that anyone misses out.

People who have the opportunity of many educational and health choices and an excellent prospect of being in a job if they want one are denying the people of the Ceduna area a similar opportunity because of their ideological bias. Most of the people who will benefit from this mine cannot afford such ideological luxury and, until they too have the benefits that people living in our society should expect, none of us should deny them the opportunity.

The Labor Party policy against mining is even more ironic when it is put in the context of the Labor Party's dilemma of having to heed the word of their union masters where word has it that the normal party conference would have overturned the current policy and allowed mining. However, again due to an unfortunate intervention for the people of Ceduna, the Ralph Clarke branch stacking embarrassment stopped this year's October conference from taking place. With this cancellation was lost the opportunity for the member for Giles, Lyn Breuer, and the Australian Workers Union powerbroker, Bob Sneath, to make the party see sense.

Comparisons can easily be drawn between the Yumberra experience and what happened back in 1982 when it took a Labor member, Norm Foster, to cross the floor to allow Roxby Downs to go ahead and allow the subsequent benefit that has accrued to the people there. Meanwhile children in the Ceduna district are growing up without the prospect of work and all that employment means in our society. They do not want to leave an area where they feel part of the community and where they have their support networks to go and try their luck in the cities where the dice is often weighted against them. However, many do.

Over the past few years the number of school children alone has dropped from 910 in 1984 to 527 children attending the Ceduna Area School today. In a letter of support to me from the Chairman of the Wirunga Association, representing the traditional owners, Milton Dunnet (Mitch to many) says:

*A high proportion of our people are unemployed with limited opportunities available locally for employment. This has resulted in a drift from our communities to other centres, separating our families and children. Exploration and mining will provide direct benefits into the local community and the state.*

The low value of the commodities such as grain and wool, combined with the unreliability of the weather, mean that the traditional income sources will not improve in the near future. Ecotourism, the proposed salvation for the area, is gradually beginning to happen, particularly with the whales at the head of the bight. However, the town would have to support five star accommodation to really tap into this and to be viable the accommodation would need to have a larger supporting population such as would be achieved by mining.

When we visited the park one of those present was an Aboriginal man who had begun to take a leading role within the local community but who was killed soon after. In his obituary the local paper, the West Coast Sentinel, said that at the time of the Yumberra delegation he told of his hopes that mining could create jobs for all in the Ceduna community, not just Aboriginal people. Many of us echo his hopes and trust that people who have a sense of justice and that wonderful Australian trait of giving everyone a fair go will support this motion and, on 9 November, when this motion is due to be debated in the upper house, support those people who will face opposition to their stand—Terry Cameron and Trevor Crothers—who have recognised that many of the leaders in their former Party have become divorced from the reality of the struggle of the ordinary people who live and work in our wonderful state of South Australia, particularly those who live and work in the more remote parts of regional South Australia well away from them, parts like Ceduna that most of them would never have visited, except possibly on their way to Perth. I support the motion.

### **YUMBARRA CONSERVATION PARK 10 April 1996**

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** I support the Minister for Mines and Energy's motion seeking to establish a select committee to inquire into the re-proclamation of a small section of Yumberra Conservation Park inland from Ceduna

on the Far West Coast. For a moment let us leave the arguments for and against re-proclamation of a conservation park and all its ramifications, as I believe they will be well covered by others, and instead let us think about the people who live and work at Ceduna and in the surrounding regions. Work prospects are poor in the town of Ceduna, particularly for youth. The town is isolated. Air transport to the outside world is expensive and sometimes irregular. The air strip is still dirt. The port of Thevenard is poor and restricted to a certain small class of vessel due to the depth and turning limitations in the channel. The area west of Ceduna has no reliable water supply—a basic necessity that most of us take for granted. If Yumberra proved to be a bonanza and contained significant minerals wanted by export markets, we could have a bonanza on Eyre Peninsula and in South Australia.

The benefits, particularly to Ceduna and its people, would be countless and beyond comprehension. Mining wealth means more transport, more transport leads to competition and competition will result in lower costs. As a result, the Ceduna runway would be sealed and reliable air services would be available. The aquaculture industry and fishermen taking rock lobster and scale fish from the Great Australian Bight would benefit from better air links to their export markets. The emerging tourism in the area would also be given a tremendous boost, with the watching of whales and the Gawler Ranges becoming accessible to many more visitors.

Jobs of all descriptions and for all ages would be created in the first developmental stages of the mine and then in the mine's operation, depending on the level of processing. The port of Thevenard would be upgraded and deepened, allowing more markets to be developed for locally produced granite and gypsum—two local primary products for which the potential is being stifled due to the restrictions imposed by the small Thevenard port. All these are positives for Ceduna and the people in this region who depend on this Government to help provide new work opportunities.

The Ceduna District Council area has been well served by our Speaker, the member for Eyre, for many years. Sadly for the Speaker, after the next election a redistribution of boundaries will change the representation for this region and it will become part of the seat of Flinders which I proudly represent. I make the same commitment to the people of the Ceduna area that I made to the people of Eyre Peninsula, now in Flinders: that I support the creation of jobs, and more jobs, in our region. Creating jobs on Eyre Peninsula is not an easy task, especially for the inland and isolated towns. The marginal farming regions, such as Ceduna and others, were severely financially disadvantaged by the two factors of drought and low rural commodity prices in recent years. Reliance on farming is dangerous to the prosperity of this region, and we now have an opportunity to change this by fully exploring the potential for mining.

I remind members that true conservation can be funded only if the resources can be spared to protect what is considered valuable. Generating mining income can help not only to keep people in Ceduna but to finance protection and preventative measures in the conservation parks system. I ask members to listen to the people who ultimately will benefit from having more wealth in this region; to listen to those who appreciate an employment option for their youth; to listen to those in business and commerce who appreciate what a more modern port could achieve for Ceduna; to listen to those seeking a sealed runway for the airport and other infrastructure upgrades that a mine could provide; and also to listen to those who want the funding to conserve properly the parks that we have, vermin and weed control being just two of the matters needing attention. I ask members to consider whether a small trade off of about 1 per cent of the Greater Yellabinna region is worth the prosperity and growth to a region which is crying out for economic activity.

As I follow in the footsteps of our Speaker, I will not fail in my duty to the people of this region. I will fight to see that the potential mineral prospects in the Yumberra Conservation Park are fully explored. Years ago the economy of South Australia was saved by mining. That was when gold was exported to South Australia from the Victorian goldfields. An Inspector of Police, Alexander Tolmer, led the consignments of gold back to Adelaide, and the revenue from these shipments was used to pay the State's public servants. This time I believe that mining has the potential to help to improve greatly the future of the upper West Coast and provide royalties for a cash-starved State Treasury which has been burgled by the bumbling attempts of an inept Administration trying to create paper profits from a bank instead of investing in real assets such as those found in our mining potential.

Already the benefits of mining at Roxby Downs are obvious to Eyre Peninsula and South Australia. I ask that the record show that a Liberal Government was instrumental in passing the Indenture Bill to create this mine to the north of Port Augusta. Local businesses from Eyre Peninsula have expanded to include Roxby Downs, and many families and sons and daughters of Eyre Peninsula people have made their new lives in the town. A significant mineral prospect near Ceduna could be even more valuable to the region than Roxby Downs has been. I am sure that a

parliamentary select committee will prove me right and bring in a positive finding. I fully support the investigation of mining north of Ceduna in the Yumbarra Conservation Park.