



\$10b island plan could sway votes at election

DANIEL HATCH and RIFET HRKIC

An audacious, \$10 billion island development proposed for Fremantle's North Quay could become a divisive election issue.

Alan Carpenter and Attorney-General Jim McGinty are against it but Opposition Leader Troy Buswell and shadow planning minister Simon O'Brien both say it should be given a chance.

The construction of six islands behind a 3.5km breakwater at North Port Quay will only go ahead if the State Government releases 345ha of seabed for lease and then freehold after environmental and planning approvals are gained.

"The group came and saw me three years ago, I told them then it would never happen and I hope it never happens," the Premier said. "I don't know what's driving this proposal but it's not common sense."

But Mr Buswell said the instant dismissal of the project was typical of a Premier and Government with no vision. "These kinds of projects

deserve to at the very least be investigated and properly considered rather than arrogantly dismissed out of hand as the Premier has done," he said.

Mr O'Brien said he had some social, environmental and engineering concerns but the proposal broadly supported the Liberal Party's vision for the area, released in December, which relocates heavy port operations and road freight traffic to James Point.

When quizzed about the proposal last month, Planning Minister Alanah MacTiernan said she had told the proponents three years ago it would not be accepted by the public because it was too large. "I understand there has been some revision, but he's got a lot of hurdles to surmount before it could get under way," she said.

Fremantle Ports chief executive Kerry Sanderson said she was concerned the proposal engulfed the port, potentially affecting the efficiency of its operations

"We also have safety concerns in terms of the access road and the

potential for recreational vessels to impact on the shipping channel," she said. "Ports worldwide are being threatened by urban encroachment because when people move nearby they suddenly complain about the 24-hour operation and try to get them closed down."

Fremantle mayor Peter Tagliaferri said he would keep an open mind on the concept until he was fully briefed, suggesting it was exciting but there were concerns about reclamation, connectivity, integration and transport conflict.

Save Freo Beaches Alliance convenor Michael Martin said the failed Three Harbours proposal had shown locals were against the privatisation of the seabed but the developers needed to have the chance to explain their proposal fully.

Chairman of urban think-tank FuturePerth Sean Morrison said the project had the potential to be a leader in environmental design and naysayers should wait to see the detail.



NORTHERN EXPOSURE



I've seen the palm development off Dubai, it's startling, incredible, but this isn't the Arabian Gulf, this is the Indian Ocean. This is the Port of Fremantle and it's unnecessary.
PREMIER ALAN CARPENTER



It's a visionary proposal that at least deserves the benefit of investigation and debate. The boldness of the plan is impressive. It could only be made a reality though if the engineering, social and environmental issues were satisfactorily addressed.
OPPOSITION LEADER TROY BUSWELL



While acknowledging the shortage of boat launching facilities in the metropolitan area, sites other than Rous Head should be investigated.
FREMANTLE PORTS CHIEF KERRY SANDERSON



I imagine the community will be split on this, but it's a conversation the Fremantle and WA community are mature enough to have.
FREMANTLE MAYOR PETER TAGLIAFERRI



I think you can expect substantial opposition, but given the line-up of developers and the sort of resources they have at their disposal it will be a tough task for voluntary groups who oppose it.
SAVE FREO BEACH ALLIANCE SPOKESMAN MICHAEL MARTIN



It's obviously very interesting and exciting, but it is going to put that area under extreme stress in terms of access and the homes would have to be highly durable to withstand those environments.
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS WA PRESIDENT ROD MOLLETT