

Wetlands threatened

THE Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre claims a joint West Australian Planning Commission and Main Roads WA project will threaten the eco-tourism industry and the environment of North and Bibra lakes.

The proposed Roe Highway extension between North Lake Road and the Kwinana Freeway will cut through significant wetlands and pristine bush.

The lakes form the gateway to the Beeliar Regional Parklands and have long been on the interim list of the State Heritage Register.

CWEC environmental education officer Denise Crosbie said the nature sanctuary, which attracts eco-tourists from WA, interstate and overseas, will be irretrievably damaged if the plan goes ahead.

By KAREN OAKLEY

"A significant regional swamp would be lost for on-off ramps and it would destroy what has been created here," Ms Crosbie said.

The area, about 15km from Perth, supports kangaroo, possum and bandicoot populations and a huge variety of waterfowl species and other bird life.

The significance of the wetland area — and the CWEC — was highlighted on the television program Postcards on Sunday, May 14.

The education centre caters for thousands of visitors, including Perth school children learning about heritage and environmental values.

Local community groups, including

Com-Net and the North Lakes Residents Association, have united to fight the proposal.

The area is also spiritually significant to Aboriginal people.

The Labor Party and Greens WA are also opposed to the plan.

The alarm was raised when Main Roads sent a newsletter, in February, to determine which groups they should consult in regard to building of this stretch of the Roe Highway, known as section eight. It is expected to be a major freight and truck route.

However, Dr Carmen Lawrence, ALP Federal Member for Fremantle, said local residents deserved a say on whether the road went ahead at all.

Dr Lawrence said the proposed four-to-six lane highway would cut a

swath through the wetlands between Bibra and North lakes damaging habitat and recreation areas.

It would also split the community and bring problems of increased traffic, noise and pollution.

"The proposal depends on the construction of the highly contentious Fremantle Eastern Bypass, something that will not occur, if, as I hope, the Labor Party forms government after the next election," she said.

Greens (WA) MLC Jim Scott has also criticised the plan, saying there is no need for the Roe Highway to go beyond Kwinana Freeway.

"It's an agenda being pushed without public support," he said.

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