

TONKIN HIGHWAY, EXTENSION BEYOND THOMAS ROAD

Grievance

MR M.P. WHITELEY (Roleystone) [9.55 am]: My grievance is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It relates to the need to extend Tonkin Highway beyond Thomas Road for vehicles to get around the back of Byford to relieve traffic pressures on Byford once Tonkin Highway reaches Thomas Road in 2006, which I believe is the predicted date. Before I talk about that extension, I must say that the Tonkin Highway project is very welcome in the south east corridor. The extension of Tonkin Highway from Albany Highway in Gosnells to Armadale Road by 2004 and then on to Thomas Road by 2006 is an excellent outcome for the south east corridor. People in the minister's and my electorates in suburbs such as Kelmscott, Armadale and neighbouring suburbs such as Roleystone and Bedfordale will benefit enormously from heavy freight and vehicle traffic movements being moved off Albany Highway. The people of Roleystone will also benefit, as more heavy vehicle traffic will be diverted to Canning Road, Welshpool Road and Tonkin Highway, rather than through Roleystone on Brookton Highway. That is a very welcome innovation.

However, I am concerned about the effect on Byford. There will be some immediate benefits. The section of South Western Highway between Byford and Armadale will be less busy; residents in both our electorates and Byford will benefit from that. My concern is that southbound traffic on Tonkin Highway will have to turn left at Thomas Road, head towards South Western Highway, turn right into South Western Highway and go south through Byford. That is unsafe. It will split the town and destroy the amenity of Byford. The town centre of Byford is basically spread either side of South Western Highway. That is an undesirable outcome for the people of Byford.

Tonkin Highway must be extended beyond Thomas Road. The original plan of the Court Government was to extend Tonkin Highway south beyond and around the back of Mundijong and connect it with the South Western Highway at Jarrahdale Road. The intention of the Court Government was to eventually turn Jarrahdale Road into a southern link road. As the minister knows, and as I have said in this place before, this Government gave a commitment, which it has honoured in full, that no part of Jarrahdale Road west of Blue Rock would be incorporated into a southern road. That means that this plan is redundant, and a good thing it is too, because it was simply a more expensive and less attractive option.

The minister set up the great southern and central wheatbelt freight study and appointed a steering committee to oversight that study. The committee comprised metropolitan local government representatives from Armadale, Serpentine-Jarrahdale and Kalamunda; country local government representatives from Broomehill, Murray, Boddington, Beverley and Wickiepin; representatives from the Western Australian Local Government Association; representatives from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure; and me. The committee worked through a very constructive and consensus process and came up with some very good conclusions that will benefit both freight transporters and the outer urban communities that I have talked about. It was a series of win-win solutions. The specific win-win solution to which I refer is the extension of Tonkin Highway beyond Byford so that it will veer to the South Western Highway somewhere near Orton Road and link with a future southern link road, if it is ever built, using the haul road options north of Jarrahdale and incorporating part of Nettleton Road. This is a win-win situation for the people of Byford as it would take the heavy traffic from the town centre, and benefit the people of Jarrahdale as it would remove the threat of a future southern link road that would destroy the amenity of that community. It would also be a win for the freight transporters because the Tonkin Highway route is shorter than alternatives to the majority of destinations towards Kwinana and the outer harbour and points north to Kewdale. That would be a win for the majority of freight transporters. This proposal would certainly be a win for the Government, which would have spent bucket loads of money building Tonkin Highway to Mundijong unnecessarily. Mundijong would benefit because it would not have a heavy freight route and the associated traffic noise around the back of Mundijong.

The steering group recognised that the planning for the southern link road needed to be integrated into this planning. The southern link road is a long-term strategy. This plan interconnects a sensible route for the southern link road and a sensible route for the Tonkin Highway. The extension of Tonkin Highway beyond Byford is a short-term priority identified by the steering committee.

It is recognised that money is tight. The extra expenditure with this proposal would be in the order of \$20 million, but that is opposed to the \$50 million to \$60 million that would eventually be spent on the longer and less effective Mundijong and Jarrahdale Road option. The route would be a win for Byford in taking heavy traffic from the town. It would be a win for Jarrahdale as it would remove the threat of the southern link roads. It would be a win for freight transporters as it offers a shorter route, and it would be a win for the Government. I know the minister has a great capacity to see the long-term impacts of her decisions. She is a very visionary

minister. This option will save the Government enormous amounts of money. I would like to hear the minister's thoughts on the subject.

MS A.J. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [10.02 am]: I thank the member for the grievance and the very positive contribution he made to the great southern and central wheatbelt freight study. It is important to talk about this matter in its broad context. Before the last election, the Labor Party was opposed to the construction of the Jarrahdale Road option. The idea of a southern transport link dissecting that historic and beautiful town site was very ill-conceived. The Government was very pleased to be able to give effect to its election commitment and provide certainty to the people of Jarrahdale that that would not happen. The decision of the previous Government to locate the southern link road through Jarrahdale arose from a much bigger failure, which this Government has attempted to address. First, it is necessary to integrate land use and transport planning. It is not appropriate to have an agency focusing only on roads and moving freight from point A to point B in a defined manner while leaving all in its wake and creating all sorts of consequences for land use planning and the communities affected by its decisions. The creation of the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, bringing the planning of roads into that agency and integrating it with all land use and other modes of transport, has been an important strategic position. The State is now in a better position to undertake the sort of detailed work taking place in the community. The great southern and central wheatbelt freight study has been overseen by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, with the involvement of the local authorities and the good member.

Second, a very holistic view is needed of freight movements, and long-term and strategic planning is required. That has been done with the freight network review, and the report under discussion is a subset of that network review. What will the picture be over the next 10 to 20 years? Instead of saying that we will build a road designed 30 years ago, consideration will be given to changes in exports and imports and direction of traffic, and adjusting our plans accordingly. This involves an integrated approach.

This study produced a range of recommendations, although it has yet to be finalised. I understand the member has particular interest in talking about the proposal for the extension of Tonkin Highway. Everything I have read on this proposal to move the southern link road - even though it is recognised as a long-term need - further north and out of Jarrahdale Road and link it to a different configuration of Tonkin Highway has been positive. Rather than taking the highway to Mundijong, the next stage of Tonkin Highway will be to take it from Thomas Road down to Orton Road and then across to South Western Highway. A number of benefits are involved. It would create a good separation of the Byford town site, and provide an opportunity for condensing and provide a framework for the rural urban village of Byford. It would provide relief for Thomas Road. The cost of the extension of Tonkin Highway down to Mundijong may be more than the \$50 million or \$60 million the member suggested. The project was getting difficult to schedule in the short term. The option outlined by the member will involve a somewhat more modest cost. The figure of \$20 million is probably current, but it does not include some considerable costs in land acquisition. Therefore, it might be more in the order of \$25 million or \$30 million.

Looking at time frames referred to in the study, 2008 is realistic. Therefore, some traffic will come down Thomas Road in the short term. It was always known that some delays would be involved between the first and second part of the project. Byford will undergo a fairly significant expansion over 2006-07. It is then appropriate to schedule this alternative road for 2007-08. I am very happy to give an in-principle commitment to this realignment. It makes sense. I give a pledge to do what I can in next year's budget deliberations to raise this project with a view to having it in the forward estimates and a commitment for construction somewhere around 2007-08. I know that some members would like to see that provided earlier, but one must be realistic about the many competing demands. When people understand that the current Tonkin Highway project involves a cost in excess of \$140 million, there is vast appreciation in the area that the Government has given a major infrastructure boost to the south east corridor with that extension. I am sure a little patience will be shown if the next phase is a little further away.

I thank the member for Roleystone, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and all the shires for their excellent work in getting the strategy together.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Grievances noted.