

**BUS SERVICE — ROUTE 354**

*Grievance*

**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka)** [9.38 am]: This issue is just as passionate and probably needs just as much attention as the last grievance received, so I ask members that we give it its due attention. This is about the withdrawal of the 354 bus service through Nollamara. I am very pleased the Premier has come to take this grievance. People have come to the public gallery, so they are very pleased to be hearing their grievance today. They are very distressed about the removal of this service and I will tell the Premier why. Because the Premier has visited Nollamara and Mirrabooka and because of the government's commitments during the 2013 state election campaign around transport, he is very well aware of the north eastern suburbs' urgent transport needs, of which the 354 bus through Nollamara is an important component.

The 354 bus departs every 15 minutes from Mirrabooka bus station. It travels down Ravenswood Drive to the top of Flinders Street and through the heart of Nollamara to Charles Street, into the city, and back. Most importantly, it takes a small but important circle route departing Flinders Street and around the Nollamara shops. The Premier knows these shops, having been hosted by the Nollamara IGA prior to the 2013 election. Even though this popular route has consistently high patronage and caters to the residents' transport needs within the suburb, it will be withdrawn after the commencement of the 970 bus route. Patrons' accessibility into the heart of Nollamara, and therefore businesses, will suffer. As I said, the Premier knows that this corridor is the only one without a high-frequency-high-movement passenger transport service in Perth. Although I do not want to dwell on the disappointment of the people of Mirrabooka and Nollamara when the government withdrew the Metro Area Express light rail project, the government's commitment was a response to the overwhelming need for effective public transport into the area. Flinders Street is a primary artery towards the CBD. In 2008, it carried in excess of 17 000 vehicles a day. Traffic numbers have grown annually by three per cent. In 2016, congestion is very serious. As a resident, I know that many vehicles use Flinders Street to go into the city. Flinders Street does not need the additional cars that will result from the removal of the 354 service. Although the department's response might be that the new 970 service caters for this, as the 354 meets the need for inter-suburb transport as well as transport into the city, this is not an accurate assessment. It is my strong belief that the removal of the 354 route will increase traffic. It is important to note that bus travel times on Flinders Street into the city have already increased from 27 minutes in 2006 to 41 minutes in 2011. Any diminution in service, given that half of Flinders Street will be cut out of the new route, will cause further delays due to traffic.

This grievance is about getting the best transport option available for the community given the acknowledged need of this corridor. The 354 route is an institution in the Nollamara area because it supports community interaction through its journey through the heart of the suburb, past local community facilities such as the Nollamara seniors club, the award-winning Pharmacy 777, the RSL, the local bowling and tennis clubs and playing fields and, importantly, supermarkets, restaurants, shops and other services. Lorna, an 83-year-old resident from the area who is here in the gallery today, is representative of the demographic of Nollamara. Based on the 2011 census, a quarter of the Nollamara population is over 50 years of age. Lorna is deeply distressed that her independence has been undermined by the removal of a bus service that she has used for the last 50 years to go shopping, but, most importantly, to visit her daughter. It is a route that is no longer available, as a bus journey along the length of Flinders Street is no longer possible with the cessation of the 354 service. Francis is also in the gallery with his son because he feels so strongly about being cut off. He lives on Ravenswood Drive, near the top of Flinders Street. There is no capacity for him to get to the bottom of Flinders Street because there is now a gap in the service. I will give the Premier copies of the maps if he would like to see them because the gap in the service becomes really clear when we see the maps.

I would like to congratulate Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson for pursuing this issue because it is an illustration of the social consequences when we look at transport as simply timetables and routes and not people movement and their needs. The department may explain this away by saying that it consulted. However, what it needs to reveal to the Premier is that those consultations showed strong opposition to the removal of the 354 service by the community, and, most importantly, the City of Stirling. Indeed, it is misleading to say the Public Transport Authority was fully open with the residents. It had a few consultations at the Nollamara shops—I understand that there was only one—where residents are most affected. Even the stall at Mirrabooka was more of a 970 service promotion than advising that the 354 service would be discontinued. I can attest to this as I stopped at the stall myself and spoke to staff members. At no stage did they say that the 354 would be discontinued, which would have affected me because it is my local bus stop and my son catches it. I have caught it only a couple of times, but I would have remembered that.

The residents in the area welcome the 970 route. However, given the investigations by the department that establish clear evidence for transport needs in this area, there is capacity for the 354 route in addition to the 970.

The frequency of the service is also very important. The replacement 384 service does not compensate for the loss of the 354 service. It runs less frequently and fundamentally alters the strength of the 354, which is a through-route along the entirety of the main artery road of the suburb—Flinders Street. The map of the 370 and 384 services demonstrates this by cutting the route in half, with one service not accessible to the other along Flinders Street. This area does not need less public transport. Frankly, keeping the additional route is the least that the government can do given the failure to deliver MAX. The removal of the 354 makes no sense, based on Transperth's data. The 354 route has double the patronage of the 870 route, which will now become the 970 route.

The Premier will see from the maps the gaps in the bus routes. Street-corner meetings have been attended by many people, so it is a concern shared by many. I understand that the PTA will say that these things happen when a bus route is changed. However, this is an established, over 50-year-old bus route. It services a community that has a need, including an aged community. It keeps a hub and community going. Those issues about place-making and public transport are very important and should be delivered upon.

[Interruption from gallery.]

**MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier)** [9.46 am]: I am sure that they are not clapping the fact that I am standing. However, I welcome the people in the public gallery who obviously live in the Nollamara area primarily and I thank the member for Mirrabooka for her grievance. I have some information provided by the Public Transport Authority, which, if I am allowed to, I will read out. First, the member raised the Metro Area Express light rail project, which is something that will be talked about for some time. I certainly recognise the need for an improved public transport service and a rail option to go out into that area. From an aerial view of Perth, we can see a rail line running up the coast and one running out to Midland. We are about to have one running to the airport. We also have rail lines running down to Armadale, Fremantle and, obviously, Mandurah. A big chunk of Perth is growing and we essentially now have an inner-city to mid-city area that does not have the quality of service in public transport that the rest of the metropolitan area does. Although government is yet to make a decision, I expect that after the Forrestfield–Airport rail project has been completed, the next major rail project in this state will be out through that north-east corridor, which is the area raised by the member. The light rail project certainly was an option but as we looked at it more carefully, it became clear that light rail had severe constraints in getting into the city and it would have been very disruptive in construction. The cost of tunnelling has come down dramatically and to build a tunnel and a heavy rail as an underground service will provide a far better service that is capable of moving more people more quickly, and it could ultimately be extended above ground out into both the Wanneroo and Ellenbrook areas. That is most likely to be the next major rail project to take place after the airport project.

The PTA has provided some information that I will read out because it is very factual. As part of the proposed new route 970 super bus between Perth city and the Mirrabooka bus station, Transperth is making a number of changes including to route 354 and also to routes 370 and 870. The existing route 354 bus service will be replaced by the new route 384 bus service and will operate between the new Perth City Busport and Mirrabooka bus station via Charles Street, Wanneroo Road and the Nollamara Shopping Centre. It is proposed that these changes will take effect on 9 October 2016, as advertised. The route 384 bus service will operate every 15 minutes during peak hours, every 30 minutes during the day on weekdays, every 30 minutes on Saturdays and every 60 minutes on Sundays and during the evening. The changes were discussed at a number of community forums that were held on 31 March, 9 April, 14 April and 16 April at various locations in the area and along the route. The PTA's view is that the majority of feedback was positive, but I acknowledge that if we change a bus route some people will be clearly disadvantaged, and obviously some of those people are here.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** But the City of Stirling, which is the representative, is strongly opposed to it. The PTA is telling you mistruths.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Some people—obviously some here today—will be disadvantaged. I am sure others will find it advantageous to them, but we tend not to hear from them.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** No-one is saying you shouldn't have the 970 bus route. What they're saying is that you shouldn't cease the 354.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Okay. Transperth acknowledges that there will be a reduced frequency on the route 384 bus service relative to the route 354 service. It believes that that is reflective of patronage levels in certain sections of the Nollamara area, particularly for older individuals, but I reckon that is of little comfort.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** The thing is that the 354 is such a highly patronised bus. It is actually used more than the 970, so they are replacing it with something that hasn't got as many passengers.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Yes, I will conclude: the route 384 bus service will also provide Wanneroo residents with direct access to Mirrabooka for the first time. That is a positive. In the Public Transport Authority's view,

Nollamara residents will still be within reasonable distance of the alternative high frequency routes, including the proposed new route 970 bus service, the route 415 bus service along Ravenswood Drive and the route 386 to 389 bus services on Wanneroo Road.

The member for Mirrabooka offered to provide me a map. I will have a look at that and I will certainly pass on those comments to the PTA.

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Can you have a look at the map and give it serious consideration? I just think there is a bit of modelling. It has cut out the main artery. It has put a gap in it so you can't travel down it, and that means it takes out shops and all sorts of things. The 354 continuing would still give them what they needed; they just have to change that 384. It is a possibility. I have raised an issue about buses before with the previous transport minister and, when I showed him, he said that was a possibility and we got that win for the elderly community in our area. Sometimes I think the PTA just looks at routes, but we have to look at what they service, and this services that hub.

**Mr C.J. BARNETT:** Okay. If the member gives me those maps, I will certainly look at them.