

ELLENBROOK RAIL LINE

Grievance

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [9.12 am]: My grievance to the Premier is about the Liberal Party's election commitment to commence construction of the Ellenbrook rail line in 2012. During the recent state election campaign, the Liberal Party made a commitment to match a Labor Party commitment to start construction of the Ellenbrook rail line in 2012. I will quote the *perthnow* website from 1 September —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! I am trying to take a point of order from the member for Joondalup.

Point of Order

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Mr Speaker, the member for West Swan is clearly making a grievance, which would normally be heard in silence, yet the Premier, the member for Carine and the member for Swan Hills are interjecting. I think the member should be heard in silence. It is an important issue—not only for Ellenbrook, but for the whole state.

The SPEAKER: The member for Joondalup's point is well made and I urge members to listen to the member for West Swan in silence.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will continue by quoting the *perthnow* website, which stated —
Construction of the line would begin in 2012.

The Premier is referred to as saying that “the next logical extension” of the rail line would be the Ellenbrook rail line, which is to be completed “by 2015”. The Premier has matched the Labor Party's commitment to begin construction of a rail line in 2012 that is to be completed by 2015. The Liberal Party's election costing booklet released during the 2008 election campaign sets aside \$53 million in this term of government to begin the construction of the Ellenbrook rail line. The Liberal Party's own costing document sets aside \$53 million for the construction of that rail line!

Since that election, other ministers have confirmed the proposed timeframe. At the end of September 2008, the Minister for Planning was quoted in local papers as saying that he was committed to the timeframe outlined during the election campaign.

The Liberal Party's midyear review document—that is, the document released by the Liberal government in December 2008—stated that the construction of the Ellenbrook rail line would commence in this term of government. To quote from page 100 of the *2008-09 Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* —

- Construction of the Ellenbrook Railway Line (Midland Line Spur) is expected to commence in 2010-11.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Swan Hills! It is not your grievance.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Liberal Party not only brought forward the construction timeframe to 2010-11, but also increased the amount of funding committed in this term of government to start construction on the Ellenbrook rail line. Once again, page 100 of that Liberal Party document refers to \$16.3 million in 2010-11 and \$52.6 million in 2011-12 for the Ellenbrook rail line. The government's midyear review document confirms that construction would commence in this term of government. The Liberal Party's election costing booklet confirms that construction would commence in this term of government. The Premier, on television and in other forms of media, confirmed, at the time of the most recent election, that the Liberal Party would match Labor's commitment to begin construction in 2012. I recall signs —

Mr B.J. Grylls: Was a cost-benefit analysis undertaken by Labor?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I suspect it was pretty similar to the one undertaken on Oakajee!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, minister!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The timeframe for construction has been confirmed.

In correspondence from the Minister for Transport, in the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport's responses to questions on notice and in responses to freedom of information applications that I have made, a key point has been made—namely, that a study was the first necessary step in delivering the Ellenbrook rail line

according to the timeframe committed to by the Liberal Party. That study was to be about the path the Ellenbrook rail line was to take. That study was the first necessary step to be taken in the process of delivering the Ellenbrook rail line. This study was not —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The study was not about whether there was to be an Ellenbrook rail line, but about the proposed route of that rail line. This is a key point. The Public Transport Authority's "Ellenbrook Rail Link Route Definition Study (T8808)" tender document was put out in January 2009 to determine the Ellenbrook rail line route. That was a key necessary first step and yet out of nowhere it was cancelled on 6 April 2009. The study was cancelled! Since that time we have heard a number of comments—copies of which I have here but, given the interjections, I am now running out of time. Basically, I have the Premier on record saying that there was no first-term commitment to build a rail line, even though the Liberal Party's costing and midyear review documents show a first-term commitment. I have the member for Swan Hills saying that \$53 million was to —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Mr M.P. WHITELY: This is an incredibly serious issue that also affects my electorate because two of the proposed routes go through my electorate. The buffoonery from the other side is robbing the member for West Swan of time. She needs to have an extension of time to take into account the fact that members on the other side are constantly interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I hear what the member for Bassendean is saying but there will be no extension of time. When a member from no matter what side of this place names another member, it may be expected that the member so named will respond. That is a natural consequence of naming members. I accept that. There will be no extension of time. I ask the member for West Swan to please continue.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Mr Speaker, I was merely referring to what the member for Swan Hills said, as reported in the local newspaper. I may have to quote him in full about the \$53 million allocated during the recent election to begin construction of the Ellenbrook rail line. The member for Swan Hills is reported as saying —

I don't see the sense in committing \$53 million towards a feasibility study when we know we want to build the rail, ...

That \$53 million was not for the feasibility study; it was to begin construction of the rail line.

Mr F.A. Alban: You don't build it without a feasibility study first.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Swan Hills made the election commitment. Since 6 April—again, I have the quotes—we have heard the Premier, the member for Swan Hills and the Minister for Transport say that it was entirely a second-term commitment and that nothing would happen in their first term. Clearly, the commitment, as demonstrated in the costing document, the media, other material and the government's midyear review document, shows that substantial sums of money would be spent in the first four years to begin construction of the Ellenbrook rail line. The question today to the Premier is very simple: is the government committed to begin construction of the Ellenbrook rail line in 2012?

Mr M.P. Whitely: Tell the truth.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [9.20 am]: Tell the truth? I always tell the truth. During the election campaign, in those dark days of the demise of the Labor Party, we saw a desperate then Premier and a desperate former chief of staff, who is now in this place, dash out to Ellenbrook with a sign on a star picket stating that Labor would build the rail line and then try to bang it in the ground. Even the sign did not stand up; it fell over. That was Labor's level of commitment—a hastily put together media stunt.

Let me turn to the grievance by the member for West Swan. The member's motion on this matter states —

That this house condemns the Barnett Liberal government for abandoning its election commitment to start building a rail line to Ellenbrook in 2012.

I defy the member for West Swan to find where I have said that we will commence building a rail line in 2012. We have never said that.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Do not interrupt me; please give me a chance!

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Oh, the interruptions!

Neither I nor this government has ever made a commitment, either during or after the election campaign, to begin building the Ellenbrook railway by 2012. The member for West Swan has simply made up that assertion in her grievance. In her short parliamentary career, she has earned for herself an unenviable reputation for her performance. Few members have got away with as bad a start as that of the member for West Swan. She is one of the least trusted and least respected members in this house.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I would like an opportunity for Hansard to record the remarks of the Premier. I will accept interjections; members know that. But members need to keep it down to a dull roar.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: During the election campaign, when the former Premier raised the issue of a rail project to Ellenbrook, I made the comment that it was the next logical major extension of the urban rail network. I said that we would commit to an Ellenbrook railway but that it would be a second-term project if we had a second term in government. I made that very clear in a number of interviews throughout the election campaign—it would be a second-term project. I said subsequently that we would extend the northern rail line. Labor had been talking about extending it to Butler; we said that we would extend it to Brighton, which we have committed to and announced, and that will be reflected in the budget.

The election policy on transport that was put on the web a few days before the election said that a Liberal government would provide \$53 million over the next four years towards the construction of a new rail line to Ellenbrook to meet the needs of the fast-growing north-eastern corridor. And that is what we will do. We will do all the preliminary work, and the construction of that rail line will commence in our second term of government if we are elected for a second term.

The member also referred to the contracts.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; we are going to go for the full four and a half years. We have only just used up Labor's last six months. We are just starting now; we are just getting into our stride.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; members opposite have four years left on that side.

Mr B.S. Wyatt interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Victoria Park!

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: In December 2008 the Public Transport Authority called for tenders to define the rail route to Ellenbrook. One would think that would be the starting point—working out where it will be built. Tenders closed on 22 January 2009. Bids were received from eight consultants. Those bids were in the range of \$500 000 to \$1.5 million. They were high-priced responses to the tender process. The PTA formed the view, and advised the minister, that more preliminary work should be done and that it should be done internally, and we took that view. We took the view that we would use the internal expertise of the transport portfolio to do the preliminary planning work for that rail line. We will bring in the consultants as we need them. Instead of going out to tender, which is what the Labor Party did all the time—it had so many consultants, advisers, reports and brochures that it never actually governed—we have said that we have some confidence in the engineers and planners within the broader bureaucracy to start planning this project, and that is what we are doing. If we need outside expertise at various stages, we will seek it. For the moment, determining the route, the land-use planning, the acquisition issues, the stations and the preliminary design will be done in-house.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Bassendean!

Mr M.P. Whitely: Sorry.

The SPEAKER: That is all right. I understand. If the member would like to make a grievance, I will give him plenty of opportunities to make a grievance in this place. This is not his grievance; it is the member for West Swan's grievance.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The truth of the matter is that the Ellenbrook line through the north eastern corridor is the next logical major extension of the rail project. The Labor Party got to the point during the election campaign of banging a sign in the ground, which fell over. We have started the preliminary planning work and we will

continue that over the coming years. If elected for a second term, we will start the project of the Ellenbrook rail line.

Several members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I concede that I interjected a couple of times on the member for West Swan, but if grievances are going to be conducted in this way, members opposite will find that the government will provide written responses to grievances. It is a completely pointless exercise. Parliament will become a farce if there are no replies. Members opposite will get written responses.

Let me tell members what this government is doing with public transport.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Cannington!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We are doing the preliminary planning and the route selection for that project. On 2 February we announced an extension of free public transport for Seniors Card and disability card holders on weekdays. Members will remember that free transport for seniors and others on weekends was put in place by a previous Liberal-National government. We did that in the 1990s. Now we have extended free public transport to weekdays from 9.00 am to 3.30 pm. All the advances in free public transport have been done by Liberal-National governments. Nothing has been done by that side. On the northern suburbs rail line, the Labor Party —

Point of Order

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I did not get an extension to my seven minutes; I do not expect the Premier to get an extension to his.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You can speak as much as you like; every time you get up, our vote goes up.