

Mr Gary Snook; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mrs
Judy Hughes; Chairman; Mrs Carol Martin

Division 41: Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, \$2 022 324 000 -

Dr S.C. Thomas, Chairman.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr R. Waldock, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr J.W. Leaf, Executive Director, Finance and Contracts.

Mr R.D. Mann, Director, City Project.

Mr M. Burgess, Executive Director, Regional and School Bus Services, Transperth.

Mr A. Cartledge, Manager, Project Coordination.

Mr R. Farrell, Principal Policy Officer, Office of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr G. SNOOK: I draw the minister's attention to the first dot point under "Major Achievements for 2005-06" on page 713 of the *Budget Statements*. It refers to the New MetroRail project and the delivery of the last 13 three-car sets. Considering that 31 three-car railcars with a 17 000-odd passenger capacity have already been delivered to Perth, and the Perth to Mandurah railway will not be completed until mid-2007, will the government stagger the introduction of railcars to match increases in passenger numbers, or will the railcars run largely under-utilised?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The railcars will be there -

Mr G. SNOOK: They are being delivered, according to the *Budget Statements*, under "Major Achievements for 2005-06".

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We will obviously not be using the car sets that will be required for the southern suburbs rail.

Mr G. SNOOK: They will not be used. Are they in storage?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We are rotating the fleet. Perhaps Mr Waldock will describe what is happening operationally.

Mr R. Waldock: All the railcars have been received. We are in the final stage of commissioning the last few railcars. For the period between the final commissioning and the New MetroRail, we will not be putting any more railcars or service kilometres onto the northern suburbs rail. Indeed, one of the issues is that it is a matter of managing demand. We have actually catered for demand. We have put a lot more capacity into the northern suburbs, and we are happy to talk about the new railcars that we have already put onto the northern suburbs. There are two reasons they will not be used. Firstly, we do not believe any further capacity is required. Secondly, we certainly do not want to put further service kilometres in, and then have to reduce them when the southern suburbs rail is under way.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: What was the member's actual question?

Mr G. SNOOK: There has been a delay in completion. We have already purchased all the railcars; they are all there. My question is whether they will be under-utilised. What will be done with them?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: As Mr Waldock has just explained, they are being used but they are being rotated through the system. That obviously helps us save on maintenance costs, because there is less usage of each car. This is the only practical way to deal with it. The cars are being used, but each particular train set is obviously doing less than it otherwise would.

[12.10 pm]

Mr R. Waldock: We are refurbishing the current A-series railcars. As we rotate, it has allowed us to use more three-car railcar sets while taking more A-series railcars off to refurbish. That refurbishment is almost complete; we have five cars to go before we will have refurbished all the A-series railcars. It is a very good opportunity to work on the existing cars while we have some extra fleets. We could not normally do that because of our spares ratio.

Mr G. SNOOK: What is the depreciation of the railcars for the next three years?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Some of these railcars are still being commissioned. We generally need a three-month commissioning period for some of these cars.

Mr G. SNOOK: I will put that question on notice.

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Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators listed on page 711, and specifically "Customer perception of safety - independent external surveys". I understand some surveys have been carried out on customer perception of safety on trains and buses. Is it possible to get a copy of the outcomes of those surveys?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is on the web site. These are the same processes that were carried out under the previous government, so they are fairly standard.

Mr M.J. COWPER: There has been talk for some time as to whether the Westrail security guards should come under the dominion of the Commissioner of Police. Of particular concern to people in my electorate is the safety of people travelling to and from Mandurah. Can the minister advise how the government intends to ensure that there is a safe system for the new railway line?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I will offer a word of advice. The name Westrail was sold to the private sector by the previous government, along with the freight system. Alas, we can no longer use that name.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The New MetroRail.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: There have been conversations from time to time about whether it would be best to have the transit guards as part of the police force. As the member would probably be aware, as an ex-police officer, we have transit guards and we also have transit police. There are already transit police, but the role they fulfil is different from that of the transit guards. The commissioner, various ministers for police and I have had discussions about this on several occasions. We have come to a very firm understanding when this has been raised. It is usually raised by the West Australian Police Union in the lead-up to a police conference. There has been a debate about it. The police have made it very clear that they are not prepared to commit to a roster in the way this government believes it is necessary to commit to a roster. The police have said that they would notionally commit to this roster but if another security issue came up off the railway line, they would take those officers from the trains and reallocate them to tasks elsewhere. As a government, we said that that was not acceptable to us. After our most recent discussions with the police commissioner and the senior officers in the police and transit guard, we have a clear understanding that that will not happen. There is now a very strong working relationship between the transit police, the general police and the transit guard. The transit guard can be quarantined to remain on the system in the way members of the police force cannot. We think that that is absolutely crucial to the safety of the system, and that is why we are staying with the transit guard system.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Under the heading "Significant Issues and Trends" on page 708, the fourth dot point states -

The community is showing increased awareness of the adverse environmental, social and health impacts of high car usage.

It goes on to talk about optimising the use of public transport. I refer to the minister's advice in the last division when answering my question on the use of biofuels in metropolitan public bus fleets. Has the minister taken any step as the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to ensure that the metropolitan public bus fleet operators are encouraged to create a market for locally produced biodiesel?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Yes. We have had dialogue with all the bus operators and made it clear that we want to work toward this end. We were exploring a couple of processes with particular biofuel producers, but we were not able to come to an acceptable arrangement with them. They wanted very considerable subsidies. I am pleased to announce that we have just started a trial of 78 buses through Swan Transit. These buses will be using a five per cent biofuel blend, using Gull as the provider. I understand that Gull has been taking a lot of initiative in biofuels, trying to set up a retail facility. We have backed up the company with undertakings on maintenance. If there are increased costs because of maintenance, we are prepared to underwrite that. We are also putting a full monitoring process in place through the PTA, so that we can look at the impact on fuel costs and reliability. It will be an important test for the use of biodiesel in large fleet applications, particularly in buses. We will then have some capacity to move to higher ratios of biodiesel if that proves to be successful. The process is under way.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Will the minister be setting any targets for volumes of biofuels?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Over the next three to six months we want to assess how this has worked. Once we have some good reliable data that we have tested on our buses - because they are our buses - we will then be in a stronger position to start looking at whether or not it is appropriate to mandate a certain percentage of biodiesel. We are doing this work now. I want to compliment Swan Transit and Gull for taking this on. It is a very good project. For a number of years now I have been pushing the Public Transport Authority, but we have come up with a model that we think will work. Provided we get a good outcome on this, we will look at using this model across the system. Members need to understand that when we came into government, there was a contract for

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buses to use diesel. We replaced that with compressed natural gas. Only a limited number of diesel buses can be converted. However, we want to do that. Doing this sort of work helps suppliers such as Gull get the critical volume up and it certainly helps the market more generally.

[12.20 pm]

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: The first dot point on page 714 refers to the completion of city project works, including two stations. I understand that the tunnel boring machine has been tunnelling north from the William Street station box for the past two weeks. How far has it gone and how is it performing?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The project is progressing well. "Wes", as we like to call the tunnel boring machine, apparently after an old Swan Districts footballer, is off the interchange bench. The other day, we were advised that he was on fire. Some of the alarmists became concerned, but I knew that that meant "on fire" as in playing exceptionally well. The tunnel boring machine has now come out of the William Street station box, has gone under the Horseshoe Bridge and, as we speak, is whipping around towards Roe Street. We hope, all going well, that by the end of this financial year Wes will emerge in Northbridge, where he is stopping off to have a latte before he reassembles himself at the other end of the city and starts on the second tunnel.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Will I be able to travel from Joondalup to Mandurah at the required time?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We are certainly working towards that. We believe that we will have the train services up and running in July 2007. This, of course, as we have always said, is subject to the performance of the contractor, and that is always a challenge that we have to work with and we do not have total control over what it does. However, we have a strong contract in place which, we hope, will provide the contractor with the encouragement to complete the contract on time. Subject to the caveat, it is very much dependent upon the contractor. When we look on the ground at the work that has been done, we believe the completion date of late April is still achievable, and we are proceeding on that basis. As we get closer towards the end point, the predictions can become more reliable. We have said that we will review this in November, with a view to making a further statement on how the timetable is going. When we look at the work on the ground and at the progress that is being made across the board, we can see that the other packages are proceeding extremely well. Therefore, we are expecting to have the trains running so that the member for Joondalup can travel by train from Joondalup to Mandurah in July 2007. The chief executive officer has reminded me to say that with his extremely strong management team, of which he is in charge, he has every confidence that they will be able achieve that completion date.

Mr G. SNOOK: I am very impressed by that interesting interlude by the minister.

I refer to the fourteenth dot point on page 714 which refers to the design of red light surveillance cameras at six high-risk level crossings. Has a contract been signed for the purchase of the cameras; and, if so, what company will supply the cameras?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We understand that the cameras are being supplied through the police. I am happy to provide an answer by way of supplementary information.

Mr G. SNOOK: May I also have added to that supplementary information the dollar value of the contract?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Does the member have an interest in a company that supplies red light cameras?

Mr G. SNOOK: I do not get into red light cameras.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I will provide, by way of supplementary information, the cost that we have set aside for these red light cameras and the process by which we are acquiring them.

Mr G. SNOOK: Also, the name of the company that will supply the cameras and the date the contract was advertised.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: That is an interesting question.

Mr G. SNOOK: Interesting questions are always asked in this place, as the minister knows from her vast experience.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I will probe those questions.

[*Supplementary Information No A23.*]

Mrs J. HUGHES: I refer to the fifth dot point on page 708 which refers to car ownership and the demands that are being placed on the road networks and then, of course, the integrated bus and train networks. Currently 31 per cent of home owners are within a 10-minute ride of a railway station, and 66 per cent of car travel is a 10-minute drive to a railway station. Considering that I have three railway stations in my electorate and all of them

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have that great burden of those 66 per cent of cars being driven to them, will the government be looking at a more integrated approach to bus people to railways stations?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We have actually achieved a great deal in providing that degree of integration in the Perth rail system. From the time that we started the electrification of the railway system, we have focused on providing the catchment for buses. We are consciously always reviewing our bus routes to see how we can better tie them in. I do not believe any place has a better integration of bus and train services than Perth.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I come back to the tunnel under the city - I think it was package F of the contract. Firstly, will the minister advise how much the cost of the total project has blown out? Secondly, how far behind schedule is the completion of that project?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We can provide the member with the 2004-05 figure, but I do not have that figure with me now. The total project cost, and that is the total project cost as opposed to the contract cost - there are expenses in running the project over and above the amount that we pay to our friends, the contractors - is \$378 million. We will provide the member with the 2004-05 equivalent figure, if he would like.

[12.30 pm]

Mr M.J. COWPER: From memory, I think it was \$300 million.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The contract alone, when it was awarded in 2003, was \$324 million, so it certainly would not have been \$300 million.

Mr M.J. COWPER: What is the schedule for the project?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We are still working on a completion date of late April. When we look at the work that has been done on the ground, we expect that is achievable, but of course we are dependent on the performance of the contractor.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Is the minister saying that package F will be completed in April of next year?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Yes. That is the formal target date that has been accepted by the joint venture board. When we look at what is actually happening on the ground on all parts of package F, the advice I get is that that date appears achievable. However, at the end of the day I cannot guarantee it, because we have a contractor.

Mr M.J. COWPER: What was the original date?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It was the end of October 2006.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the minister agreed to provide supplementary information; and, if so, exactly what will she provide?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I will be providing the total budget figure for package F for the years 2004 and 2005.

[*Supplementary Information No A24.*]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I advise the member, just to repeat the point, that the figure is higher than the contracted amount because it includes all the other things that are done in relation to that package, and not just the contract.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I refer to service 2 on page 714. Will the minister please advise how much the state subsidies are for metropolitan passengers compared with regional passengers? Can I have a railway for the Kimberley?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We would love to give you one!

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: One from Wyndham to Broome would be just right!

The CHAIRMAN: We will not mark that down as a further question. Perhaps the minister could answer the first one.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The subsidy per passenger boarding Transperth trains is based on full cost, so it is more than just the operational cost; it includes all the interest payments, for example, and the various other depreciation factors etc, which are not based just on operational cost. For the full cost of services, the subsidy is about \$6.69 per passenger boarding Transperth trains, and that will drop to \$5.69 in 2008. The Transperth buses subsidy is \$2.88 per passenger boarding. The ferries subsidy is 29c per passenger boarding. The regional buses, which means 10 town bus services - the extent of public transport in the country is often not recognised - is \$4.24 per bus passenger boarding. The *Australind* subsidy is \$45.49 per passenger boarding. According to

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figures I have been provided - I want confirmation because I find it extraordinary - for each person who catches the *AvonLink*, the subsidy is \$150.51.

Mr G. SNOOK: That is giving something back to the bush.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: For each person who catches the *Prospector*, the subsidy is \$125.60. For each person who catches a TransWA road coach, the subsidy is \$41.31. I think that really puts some of these services into a little bit of context. Interestingly, I do not hear anyone in the city railing against providing assistance to our friends in the country.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: My question relates to page 715 and to "Service 3: Regional School Bus Services". The "Reason for Significant Variation" column that relates to the change to the 2006-07 budget estimate refers to additional budget allocations for the seatbelt program of \$5 million. Will the minister explain where that program is currently at? Will the minister detail the total cost of the seatbelt program and the regional component of the seatbelt program?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The vast majority of the seatbelt program is in country areas. I think a very small number of school bus services are in the city. Most of the non-Transperth, orange school bus services will have probably reached the end of their life by 2010. Since the start of 2006, we have introduced 23 new school buses with seatbelts. Another 19 will be introduced by October 2006. We are still working through the retrofitting program. As we have said before, there have been problems with the smaller buses, the Toyota Coasters. It may not be possible to retrofit those, because at this stage there are no crash dynamic testing data to support the retrofit, but we are still working on that. We are working through to get the retrofit program up for the other buses. There are already 23 new buses with seatbelts. A lot of the work we have been doing is making sure that we have the specifications right, so that the new buses that come onto the system have seatbelts that are properly configured. An enormous amount of work has had to go into that. We are right out there, because no-one has a standard like this anywhere else in Australia. We have had to go back and do an enormous amount of work to get this program up and running.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Does the minister have a budget figure for what she thinks the program will cost?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I think the total budget is around \$89 million over the forward estimates.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The minister has highlighted concerns with the Toyota Coaster buses maybe not being able to be retrofitted. If that were to be the case, would it mean that the figure would be less?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Not necessarily, because it may well be that it will come towards the end of the program. Obviously we will be revising this over the coming year. What has since happened is that obviously all the small buses that have been purchased are a different style of bus, and they are being purchased with seatbelts. One reason for this cost is the additional operational cost; some areas need more buses than they had previously, because once there are seatbelts, we cannot fit as many people on the bus. A lot of the cost being incurred is in increased operational costs. That is coming through the budget already.

[12.40 pm]

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I refer to the tenth dot point on page 713, which notes that a special events siding has been constructed at West Leederville station. Can the minister please confirm whether the special events being serviced by that siding are at Subiaco Oval, and what benefits will flow from the construction of the siding? I also want to ask about the Joondalup special events station.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I will focus on the Joondalup special events station, because I know that project is very dear to the member's heart. We certainly hope that that station will be finished by the end of 2007. Only a small number of companies can work on live rail; companies need a safety standard of accreditation to work on live rail. Virtually all the companies that have that capacity are fully engaged. We have had to make the decision that a number of smaller projects, such as that in the member's electorate, although it is very important, will have to wait until the major work on the southern suburbs rail has been finished. All that station work is expected to be completed by the end of 2006. We then expect to be able to mobilise that capacity on projects such as the new Victoria Park station and the station in Joondalup. We probably would have found that no company would tender for the work and, if it had, the price would have been astronomical. When Consolidated Constructions Pty Ltd went under, only a couple of firms were able to do this work. We are encouraging some other firms to do this sort of work. We anticipate that once the southern suburbs rail is completed, as the population increases in that area over the next decade, there will be demand for more stations, and we need a range of companies that are qualified to do this work.

Mr G. SNOOK: I refer to the third dot point on page 714 and the SmartRider ticketing system. First, will service users be offered a saving on the cost of their travel for using the SmartRider ticket? Secondly, will the current cost of transfer fares increase as a result of the implementation of the new system?

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Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The system itself will not result in an increase in fares. However, it will enable us to have a fairer fare system. As the member knows, there is a lot of inequity in the fare system in that there might be only 500 or 600 metres between two stations and one station is in one zone and the other station is in another zone. There are some distortions across zones. We will have a system that is based not on the accidental nature of the zone that stations happen to be in but, rather, on the distance travelled. We are not anticipating raising further revenue, but we will be able to structure the fares so that they are fairer. That is the long-term vision of what we will be doing. In the short term, the system will be rolled out in a more traditional way, but we want to move towards a distance-based system to provide greater equity. Obviously, discounts will be available for users of the SmartRider system. We are encouraging people to do autoloads through direct debits from their bank accounts, so that we can cut down on the administrative cost by having fewer cash transactions. We are working through all those issues at the moment. The paper ticketing system will still be available for those people who do not want to use SmartRider tickets. I met a group of happy pensioners last night who are part of the roll out, because seniors will be issued with dual seniors and SmartRider tickets. They said that it is a wonderful system because it gives them access to all the current seniors' benefits, including state government concessions, business discounts and free travel on Transperth, all in the one ticket.

Mr G. SNOOK: Will the paper ticketing system eventually be phased out?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: No, it is not our intention to do that. In fact, we will invest in upgrading the paper ticketing system because we recognise that there will always be some requirement for paper ticketing. We are not planning to phase out paper ticketing over the next 10 years. That would be too radical. We will be the first state in Australia with a smart ticketing system, but we recognise that, for a range of reasons, the take-up rate will be different and there will also be circumstances in which people do not have their SmartRider ticket with them and have to buy a paper ticket. Although that might happen in the fullness of time, we do not anticipate that happening for the next 10 years.

Mrs J. HUGHES: I refer to the second and third dot points on page 713, which pretty much tie in together. The dot points refer to increasing patronage and customer satisfaction, which contributes to the increase in patronage, and also to the new stations that have come online, such as at Clarkson. Patronage is continuing to grow in the transport area. Can the minister give me some idea of the increases?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I wonder whether we have a graph to make that a bit clearer. No, we do not have that available. The growth over the past five years has been about 16 per cent. There has been growth in all the modalities. This year we anticipate further growth in bus boardings of two per cent, train boardings of three per cent, which will be much greater as the service expands, and ferry boardings of 8.5 per cent. If these figures are lumped together, there has been an increase of about 16 per cent over the past five years, which is quite good. That is better than the increase anywhere in Australia. We should still aim at a better rate than that, and we are not at all complacent about that figure. However, we say that we are out there and are recognised as being one of the best states in Australia. I got a very nice telephone call from Dr Geoff Gallop the other morning. He wanted to draw to my attention - he spends an enormous amount of time reading policy issues - a report titled "Putting the Public Interest Back into Public Transport", prepared by a number of senior people from the University of Melbourne, Monash University, Swinburne University of Technology and RMIT University.

Mr M.J. COWPER: What did you pay for that?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Sorry?

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: This is very interesting and I would like to hear the minister.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the minister to please continue; we have limited time.

[12.50 pm]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I know that the Tories are not that interested in public transport, but it is interesting to note that the new Public Transport Authority that the government has set up is hailed as being among the very best in the world. Vancouver, Zurich and Perth are the three cities in the world that are said to have the best model for operating public transport. We have the structures in place to run a very capable and competent public transport system. We are kicking goals, which is demonstrated by the growth rate that has exceeded all other Australian cities over that five-year period. We are not complacent. We must invest more in public transport and we must do more for the design of integrated land use in transport planning.

Mr M.J. COWPER: When can Western Australian parents expect seatbelts to be implemented on our bus system? How many additional buses will be required? What configuration standard is being set by the Public Transport Authority?

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Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: That varies from bus to bus because of the range of different classifications for buses. As I have said, some buses already have seatbelts. The current time line that we are working towards is 2010. The Toyota Coaster is the only class of vehicle that is presenting some problems. We are currently reviewing what can be done with that vehicle because we are not confident that those buses can be successfully retrofitted.

Mr M.J. COWPER: How many additional buses will be required?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We think it is about 40. I am happy to provide that as supplementary information.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Has the PTA set a standard for bus owners to comply with the regulations?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The Australian design standards are set.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Will the number of seats in a bus be five across? When I last had a briefing on this matter, there were some concerns about weight issues and the location of fuel tanks etc.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Which class of bus is the member talking about? The standard varies for each type of bus.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I am referring to large school buses.

Mr R. Waldock: We are working through the weight issues to determine the average weight of a student so that we can make sure that the mass limits are complied with. At this stage, although we have looked at a number of seats and will probably move away from the old five-seat configuration, we are considering the McConnell two or three-seat configuration for children in the centre. It is too early to call because we are working on the mass limit. The buses we are purchasing are traditional buses with seatbelts and a two-seat configuration; therefore it is not currently an issue. We are looking to the future and are gaining more of an understanding about weight limits.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We are going through a process of calling for expressions of interest. We are seeing what the market can deliver with the idea of predetermining a range of suitable configurations.

The CHAIRMAN: I believe the minister gave an undertaking to give supplementary information.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We will provide supplementary information on the number of new buses that may be needed to accommodate that. That will be only an estimate because it will ultimately depend on which seat configurations are approved.

[Supplementary Information No A25.]

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I refer to the capital contributions on page 720 of the *Budget Statements*. Has the Public Transport Authority been favourably treated by the state government firstly by the repayment in last year's budget of the Westrail Freight debt, and secondly by the decision to deliver the New MetroRail project debt free? That is a great and visionary way of dealing with it.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We have been using the surplus to retire debt, which is very sensible. At least a billion dollars has been injected into roads over the past five years without so much as the batting of an eyelid. Some people think that we should not spend money on rail. They say that we should have loan funds on rail but provide cash injections for roads. We do not accept that. We say that given the importance of rail and the public transport system, it makes sense to deal with road and rail equally. We have retired the debt so that the southern suburbs rail can operate debt free. Similarly, last year we retired debt when, following the unfortunate and costly privatisation of the Westrail Freight business, we were left without a stream of income to service the remaining \$334 million debt. We retired that debt to stop \$20 million a year bleeding out of the Public Transport Authority. As I said, in the context that we capital inject road funding, it is only appropriate that we do the same for rail funding.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I refer to regional school bus services on page 715. I have a policy question. The minister is aware that at the start of each school year members are inundated with questions from people who travel on school bus services, particularly complimentary passengers. The minister recently announced a decision to support a complimentary service from Keninup, Narrikup and Mt Barker through to Albany, which was extended through to the end of the year. Although I do not question that decision, I am interested in the rationale behind that decision and whether there has been a change in policy for complimentary passengers and eligible passengers?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: There has been no change. However, I recognise that it is difficult to change these matters mid-year and for people to have to move their children from school mid-year. We are taking a harder line on complimentary passengers because it does not seem to matter how hard we tell people that the service is

Mr Gary Snook; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mrs
Judy Hughes; Chairman; Mrs Carol Martin

complimentary, once they have a seat on the bus, they expect that they will remain on the bus. We now get people to sign a document showing that they understand they are complimentary passengers. The principals of the schools must be very clear about this. We have held many meetings with the Department of Education and Training because it must ensure that it is being open and transparent with parents when the department encourages parents to send their children to certain schools. We are engaging in a higher degree of liaison with the Department of Education and Training so that the parents are clear about what is a complimentary passenger, what a complimentary passenger can expect and what the government can guarantee. We must also look at the issues of bussing people. Ironically, America had bussing policies to try to break down segregation, whereas we seem to have a bussing policy that might be creating segregation. I am sure that the member knows what I mean. If we do not maintain a firm line on the policy, the expenditure will become wildly out of control. We are already spending \$92 million a year on this. It is a free service. People in the metropolitan area do not get a free service. We support the free service, but it must be within a policy framework. If there is spare capacity, we are happy for parents to utilise it, but if that capacity cannot be utilised, people cannot jump up and down when it disappears and argue that they want an additional service. We recognise that there has been some ambiguity over the years and that perhaps the Department of Education and Training has not been as direct as it needed to be about that aspect. We are now making sure that each parent whose child uses a complimentary service recognises the nature of the service and the nature of their entitlement.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm