

RAILWAY LINE, NORTHBRIDGE

176. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

I refer the minister to the announcement by the City of Perth today that the sinking of the railway line through Northbridge will not be progressed because of its excessive costs.

- (1) Does the minister concede that if she had not re-routed the southern rail link and overseen a massive blow-out in the project's cost, the minister, as a member of the State Government, would have been in a stronger position to provide financial assistance to this important project?
- (2) Will the minister also guarantee that any development in that area will not negate the sinking of the entire section of the rail at no extra cost in the future?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN replied:

- (1)-(2) Suddenly the word hypocrisy seems inadequate to describe what we are hearing today. The people who advocated the discredited Kenwick option that would have deviated the railway line 12 kilometres out of its way and added an extra 12 minutes to travel time, and would have meant that it was impossible to sink the railway line, are weeping crocodile tears. This linking of the CBD with Northbridge is suddenly the most important aspect of the project. Where was this as part of the Kenwick option? It was absolutely nowhere. It is extraordinary. Can I share with the House an unbelievable statement this morning from the Janus opposite? On radio this morning, the Leader of the Opposition said that he was obviously disappointed. He said there is no doubt that the long-term development of Perth and the connection of Northbridge to the city centre is vital if Perth is to advance and become an enjoyable, lively city like Brisbane. He said that Melbourne had resuscitated itself in that way. This was not possible with the Kenwick route. I am pleased to share with the House today the news that, as the Lord Mayor and I announced today, there is a very high probability that we will still be able to achieve that important linkage between Northbridge and the central business district, a possibility that would never have been possible with the Kenwick deviation. It is true that we will not be able to sink the rail line all the way between William Street and Milligan Street. Indeed, that was plan A that we worked on that we announced would not go ahead. As we said to the media today -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: As we said today, the option of sinking the Fremantle line in the area between William Street and Lake Street is still very much a possibility. We will, of course, as part of our innovative project, bring the southern suburbs rail line right through the heart of the city. It will be undergrounded from William Street to King Street. The only line that remains to be sunk is the Fremantle line. That can be done as a separate project and we are now working on that. It is unbelievable that the Opposition, which had this incredibly flawed project, is now saying that the most important thing about the rail project is sinking it between William Street and the CBD, when it would never have been possible with its plan.