

## **TRANSPORT ISSUES — NORTHERN CORRIDOR**

### *Grievance*

**MR A.P. O’GORMAN (Joondalup)** [9.10 am]: My grievance this morning is to the Minister for Transport concerning transport issues in the northern corridor. My pre-budget submission that was presented to the Treasurer contained several of these issues. Substantial population growth in Perth’s northern suburbs means that there is a need for transport improvements. Current infrastructure is no longer adequate or able to service the demand. The issues that I will cover are not new; Labor has been highlighting these problems for some time now. My grievance will cover the widening and extension of Mitchell Freeway, overcrowding on trains, lack of parking at train stations, extended CAT bus services within the City of Joondalup and the establishment of east–west bus services.

Population growth means that infrastructure needs to expand. There is a need to widen Mitchell Freeway to three lanes from Hepburn Avenue to Hodges Drive to alleviate the current bottleneck and to extend the freeway to Hester Avenue to accommodate the additional traffic from the new residential areas being developed to the north. At present, the current peak period travel time from Joondalup to the Perth CBD is 43 minutes, and I can tell members it was a lot longer on Tuesday. From the City of Wanneroo it is about 47 minutes. There has been a dramatic increase in the volume of traffic carried on Mitchell Freeway—a trend that is only likely to continue as the projected population for the City of Wanneroo alone is expected to double over the next 10 years from its current 117 000 people to over 250 000 people. The estimated cost involved in the construction of the freeway is \$320 million.

Just a few days ago the Minister for Transport announced that Kwinana Freeway will be widened. That is great, but the federal government funding was committed in 2008. The Barnett government is spending \$1.5 billion less on road and rail projects over the next four years than Labor spent in its last four years in office. With the increase in living costs as just one example of the Barnett government gouging funds from Western Australians, surely some of the money can be allocated towards much-needed infrastructure projects and upgrades.

In relation to the lack of train station parking, recently a constituent contacted my office with concerns about the parking situation at Joondalup train station. I have that email and, if I get a chance, I will read some of it. Train station parking continues to be a problem on the train line. The Barnett government constructed 3 000 parking bays on the Joondalup to Mandurah lines—only 500 more than the 2 500 additional parking bays proposed to be built under Labor. The problem is that the car parks are already full by 7.30 am at most stations. The 3 000 bays have not even come close to addressing the problem. It is time to make sure that multistorey car parking is constructed. The car park at Currambine train station was absolutely full at midday on Tuesday. In addition to every car parking bay being full, all of the motorbike bays were full, as was the green bicycle cage, and about three dozen additional bicycles were chained along the fence.

On the issue of extended CAT bus routes and east–west bus services, there is a need to improve public transport in the Joondalup city centre and connections to its surrounding suburbs. There is a severe lack of parking within the City of Joondalup, which must prompt the need to address alternative ways of transporting people into and around the city. The Public Transport Authority 2010 passenger satisfaction monitor recorded a dramatic drop in overall satisfaction with the Joondalup CAT services, from 98 per cent in 2009 to 70 per cent in 2010. The reasons for the dissatisfaction were a desire for longer operational hours and higher frequency during peak times. The level of dissatisfaction is a result of the service’s own success. A number of locations in Joondalup are not currently serviced by the CAT bus, such as the new Motor Industry Training Association centre and the June O’Connor Centre. There is a need to expand the CAT bus service to ensure these locations are included. As the primary centre for the corridor, it is important for the surrounding suburbs to have good access to public transport.

The former transport minister acknowledged that many of the new suburbs to the east of Joondalup in the City of Wanneroo have inadequate bus services. The development of feeder bus connections to Joondalup from these suburbs will improve transport links for local residents and assist in the development of Joondalup as the primary centre for the northern corridor. The government in its election commitments promised to trial and develop additional peak-period trunk routes and to promote the advantages of commuter use of bus feeder services to access passenger rail corridors. These commitments need to be implemented now.

I know the minister is aware of the overcrowding on trains this morning. Trains on the Joondalup line—I believe this can be said for the majority of the train lines—during peak times are full to the point of there being no standing room left. I can vouch for that. I came in on the train this morning, and there was absolutely no room on the train. People were standing in the adjustable bit in the middle of the three-car carriages. This is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately. Not only is it an uncomfortable ride, but also, I am sure, it is not a safe practice.

The Barnett government has cut funding for Transperth railways by 3.4 per cent since being elected in 2008, while congestion on public transport has gotten worse. With the recent increase in petrol prices, there have been further increases in the number of passengers on public transport. This morning on my way in on the train, one of the comments I heard was that soon we will have to travel as they do in India and climb on the roof just to get to work. Under Labor, we ordered 15 new railcars.

**Mr J.H.D. Day** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** The member is not supposed to interrupt during grievances. He knows that.

**Mr T.K. Waldron:** You’re not supposed to read them.

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Yes, a member can read them. The minister should check his standing orders.

*Grievance Resumed*

**Mr A.P. O’GORMAN:** Fifteen new railcars were ordered under the Labor government and delivered late last year. Since 2008 Labor has been calling on the Barnett government to order more railcarriages, but the Barnett government has simply ignored these calls. The failure of the Barnett government to plan for growth and order more railcars is a major reason for the significant overcrowding on the Joondalup rail line. Thirty more railcars need to be ordered immediately, because it is at least a two-year lead-in time.

If the Barnett government can afford to spend \$25 million or so on a new Premier’s palace and ministerial offices, it can surely afford to buy the railcars so that people can get to work on time and not have to go to the silly situation of having late notes. It is scandalous that in a rich state like WA we cannot provide a proper public transport system. Perth and the outer metropolitan regions are already experiencing massive overcrowding on our buses and trains and increased congestion on our roads as a result of the Barnett government’s failure to properly fund public transport, which will only continue to worsen.

I invite both the Premier and the Minister for Transport to catch the train from Joondalup to Perth with me on any day of the week at peak time just to see how bad it is and to see how crowded those trains are. It is just not good enough to simply say, “Push further down the carriage.” All those areas are chock-a-block; there is no further room. As somebody said on the radio, even if a person is further down the carriage and has to get off the train, he has to push everybody out of the way. I noticed at Stirling train station this morning that at least 20 people had to step off the train to allow other passengers to exit.

**MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse) [9.18 am]:** The member has raised a whole range of issues. I will respond to some specifically, to some more generally and to some not at all. Where will I start? The member made a comment about the need to widen Mitchell Freeway between, I think, Hepburn Avenue and Hodges Drive and to extend the freeway north to Hester Avenue. I think they were the two comments the member made. I acknowledge that there is a requirement to at least look at widening the freeway north. I have been heavily lobbied by a number of members on this side of the house who represent electorates in the north of the metropolitan area, and that is indeed a matter that I am giving serious consideration to. The member highlighted the recently announced widening of Kwinana Freeway between Leach Highway and Roe Highway. The member is right; that is a project that is funded half by the commonwealth and half by the state under the program to upgrade freight routes.

There is certainly an acknowledgement of the need to do something about the freeway heading north. As I have said, I have been approached many times by members on both sides of the house about that matter. The member raised issues of public transport. I want to focus on one issue that the member talked about—that is, funding and the amount of money the government is putting into the road network. If members look in the budget, they will see a thing called the cash flow statement, which details how much of our own money the state puts into a range of different investment programs. The cash flow statement in the 2008–09 budget—the last Labor budget—showed that the Labor government had committed to \$2.44 billion of state funds to roads in Western Australia across the four years of the forward estimates. The Liberal–National government in two years—estimated for this year and anticipated for next year—will contribute \$2.445 billion of state funds to roads in Western Australia. When members look at the contribution of state funds to road building in Western Australia, they can see that this government has and will continue to put in more money than the Labor government had anticipated, notwithstanding the impact of the global financial crisis on the state finances. I think that is an important point to put on the table.

The member is right about public transport; the public transport network, in a range of areas and across the different modes of public transport, is under stress in the metropolitan area. My personal view is that the bus system is in need of additional buses and additional service kilometres to fund those additional buses. Members on both sides of the house have made me aware of holes in our network coverage and frequency issues. I am working through the processes of government in attempting to address those matters.

Let me touch on Transperth service kilometres, which is the amount of money provided by government to basically move people around. In 2001 the total number of service kilometres funded by government was 48.1 million. In 2007–08 the total number of service kilometres was 50.9 million. In other words, across seven years of Labor government in Western Australia, service kilometres increased on average by 460 000 a year. Over the last two financial years, service kilometres increased by 1.4 million. That is an average increase of 700 000 service kilometres a year.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** We built the Mandurah railway line. How are those figures right? We doubled the size of the rail system.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Is this the member for West Swan’s grievance?

**Ms R. Saffioti:** No.

**Mr A.P. O’Gorman:** Keep going.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I apologise to the member for Joondalup; I was distracted by the member for West Swan, who thinks it is her grievance. Let me talk about the issue that the member raised about trains. The member is right; 15 trains were delivered over an extended period. I read in the newspaper that the 15 trains were delivered last year. That is not the case; three trains were delivered last year. The member is right; those trains were ordered under the Labor government and paid for under the Liberal government. Those trains are now in the public transport network. Is the network still under stress? Yes. Is overcrowding occurring at certain times in peak times? Absolutely. Did overcrowding occur last year at certain times in peak times? Yes. I will give members an interesting snapshot. The Public Transport Authority of Western Australia advised me that March is the busiest month of the year for public transport. A survey done last year at Stirling station found that, of 18 services that went through the station between 7.00 am and 8.30 am, four trains left passengers behind. Those trains contained between 70 and 85 per cent total capacity. I acknowledge that we will never reach 100 per cent capacity on a train; that is ridiculous. The same survey was done this year—I think it was in late February—and found that, of the 18 services, three trains left people behind and were at a capacity of between 63 and 83 per cent. I acknowledge that that is no comfort to the people left behind, but I am trying to highlight that this is not a new issue; it is an ongoing issue.

We need to be mindful of the impact on existing patrons of the very generous support of the member for Mindarie’s constituents for public transport as we extend the northern railway line to Butler. I remind the house that the government has made that significant capital investment in the rail line. About 18 500 people on average are on the Joondalup line between 6.00 am and 9.00 am, which is peak time. The Joondalup line is the busiest line in the network. Government has to make difficult decisions from time to time on where it invests limited funds. The shadow Minister for Transport this morning urged the government to order 30 new railcars. Thirty new railcars would cost \$330 million. It is difficult to obtain \$330 million to invest in rail infrastructure. I am interested to understand the views of the no-debt shadow Treasurer on that matter. There are difficult investment decisions to make.