

Chairman; Hon Alan Cadby; Hon Jim Scott; Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Ed Dermer; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Graham Giffard; Hon Kate Doust; Hon Barry House; Hon Derrick Tomlinson; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon Bill Stretch; Hon Barbara Scott; Hon Peter Foss; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Adele Farina

Division 52: Main Roads, \$620 366 000 -

Hon George Cash, Chairman.

Hon G.T. Giffard, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr G. Martin, Commissioner of Main Roads.

Mr R. Phillips, Manager, Budget and Program Management, Main Roads Western Australia.

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

The CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Legislative Council Estimates Committee, I welcome you to today's hearing. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The Committee values that assistance.

Members are asked to sit towards the front of the Chamber where practicable so that witnesses will not have to turn their head when answering questions. It will greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek your cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the Committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to your advisers.

May I remind those members of the public in attendance that only accredited media representatives may take notes. However, full Hansard transcripts will be available to the public within a week of the close of these hearings.

The Committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. At this time, I ask the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the Information for Witnesses form.

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

WITNESSES: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: There are no questions on notice in respect of this division. The budget for Main Roads will be found at pages 869 to 890 of the *Budget Statements*.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I refer to page 877. The net cost of output has fallen from \$249.87 million to \$237.36 million, which represents a fall of \$12 million. The table for output measures shows 658 lane kilometres of new roads constructed for 2000-01 and a target of 753 lane kilometres for 2001-02. It seems that more kilometres of road are being constructed for less money. A note on the page indicates that freeway works during 2000-01 significantly increased the cost of each lane. Can I be guaranteed that the quality of the roadworks has not decreased during 2000-01? How many kilometres of freeway works were constructed during 2000-01 and how many are projected for 2001-02?

Mr MARTIN: I must make an explanatory comment. The figures are quite crude as they cover a wide range of roads, from cheaply constructed country roads to expensive metropolitan freeways. It is difficult to make a direct comparison. I do not have the details at the moment but I can provide them through supplementary information.

Hon ALAN CADBY: What about the quality of the road surfacing?

Mr MARTIN: The quality of the road surfacing is appropriate to the particular project. It is no reflection on the quality of roadworks completed.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Does Main Roads have recent valuations for land tied up in unused road reserves? Are valuations for discrete sections of the road reserves available? If so, how can I get a copy of the information?

Mr MARTIN: We should have a register of the value of the land. It would be required for the annual reporting statements. I will have to make further inquiries to see whether the department has the details the member is asking for. If details are available, they can be supplied as supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: The parliamentary secretary has agreed to that.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Numerous references are made to Roe Highway. Page 883 contains numerous references for proposed capital works. I require information for the stages of Roe Highway between Nicholson

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Road and the Kwinana Freeway. Is the estimated total cost of the works to construct and seal Nicholson Road to South Street \$99 million? A number of local authorities and I were under the impression that that was the cost not only for that stage but also for the subsequent South Street to Kwinana Freeway stage. I thought it was \$98 million for those two stages, not just for the one shown in the *Budget Statements*.

Mr MARTIN: I have some difficulty answering that question. I would have to check that and supply the information later. However, the Nicholson Road to South Street development is stage 6. Expressions of interest in that development have been advertised and will close shortly.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Again, this question might have to be taken on notice, and I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's assistance. My understanding is that the total cost of stages 6 and 7 will be \$98 million. At the end of last year or earlier this year, the federal Government advanced \$76 million towards the cost of that project. Will the minister clarify that matter? If the Commonwealth Government advanced \$76 million, where is that money shown in the budget?

Mr MARTIN: The member is correct. The budget shows that \$98 million has been provided for stages 6 and 7 from Nicholson Road through South Street to the Kwinana Freeway. He is also correct in stating that the Commonwealth has made available \$76 million towards that project. The start of that money was for this current financial year. As we are not able to use the money this year, we have discussed with the Commonwealth whether it could be reallocated so that it can match the anticipated construction time. Those discussions are continuing with the federal Government. The member's understanding was correct.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I appreciate that stage 6, the Nicholson Road to South Street stage, is going ahead. However, if stage 7 does not go ahead in conjunction with it, other members, local authorities and I are concerned that that will empty freeway traffic onto South Street with consequent impacts on the surrounding areas. Furthermore, if tenders for stages 6 and 7 are not conducted simultaneously, that will make the project more expensive by several million dollars. Therefore, I put it to the minister that stages 6 and 7 should go ahead together for these two reasons: first, the Roe Highway should be taken to a more appropriate destination, for example, another freeway; and, secondly, to save several million dollars of public money.

Mr MARTIN: The member is correct about the splitting of stages 6 and 7. As I mentioned earlier, stage 6 is in the marketplace and expressions of interest, which close in November, have been advertised. Stage 7 has been held back by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure for the purpose of conducting a freight network review. On the completion of that review it is anticipated that the final route for stage 7 will be identified and we will then need to go through the various processes to put it into the market.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Will that cost extra?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the member would like additional information, perhaps Mr Martin will provide it.

Hon E.R.J. DERMER: I refer to the capital works in progress on page 882. The estimated total cost to construct and seal the Geraldton southern transport corridor is \$46 million. The estimated expenditure for 2000-01 is \$4.3 million, and \$4.8 million for 2001-02. I refer to the major policy decisions since the state election on page 870. That shows this financial year's budget estimates and the estimates for the out years to 2005. It has been suggested that there was some public misunderstanding and that the Government had not committed itself to provide funds for the out years. I was pleased to see that commitment in the budget. I would appreciate detailed information, as best as can be provided this afternoon, about the benefits that will be derived from this substantial expenditure commitment by the Gallop Labor Government.

Mr MARTIN: The primary benefits of the project will be to remove the railway line from the foreshore in Geraldton, which may be a barrier to development that the City of Geraldton wishes to conduct. It will also provide a primary freight corridor for road and rail that will make a more or less direct line from the industrial area to the port.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: I would like clarification of the road sections detailed in pages 881 to 885 of the *Budget Statements*. I will concentrate on the Cervantes-Lancelin and the Hyden-Corrigin roads, which the previous Government would have funded. Bearing in mind the importance of those roads to a range of people, what is the program for them in the out years? I would also like to know the out years estimates for grain logistics, lime sands and the Derby Airport to the turn off of Binnu-Tenindewa-Muir's Road. I will provide members with a list of those roads.

Mr MARTIN: I can provide some answers; however, it would take some time for me to dig through my notes. It may be more valuable if I provide supplementary information if the parliamentary secretary agrees.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: Yes, I agree.

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Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Will the minister allow me to have the estimates for the out years for the works in progress of the roads being built? I would like to ask questions about those first two roads.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: How much information is the member asking for?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: There are seven roads.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: For what years?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: For the budget period.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: For the forward estimates?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Yes.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: We could provide the figures for the forward estimates.

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: Would the member comment specifically on Cervantes, Lancelin, Hyden and Corrigin?

[3.10 pm]

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: We will have to supply that as supplementary information.

Mr MARTIN: I indicated that I would be able to provide that information but it will take some time. Alternatively, I can provide it as supplementary information.

The CHAIRMAN: Under the circumstances that question will have to be taken on notice because I have a huge number of members who want to ask questions.

Hon KATE DOUST: I refer to works in progress on page 883 of the *Budget Statements*. Is the Government still committed to deleting the Fremantle eastern bypass from the metropolitan region scheme? If so, when does the Government expect to present an MRS amendment to Parliament?

Mr MARTIN: It is the Government's policy not to proceed with the Fremantle eastern bypass, and to remove the reservation from the MRS. I do not have carriage of that activity because it comes under the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, so it would have to provide the member with information about the actual timing.

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with that division later this afternoon if the member wishes to raise that question again.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: My question relates to some significant country roads particularly in the south west, and I am sure Mr Martin did not mean by his earlier comment that the standard of country roads does not have to be as high as the standard for city roads.

Under the major policy decisions listed at page 870 in the *Budget Statements*, I can see only the Bunbury port access road and Peel deviation. My question relates to the current time frame and forward estimates for not only those two roadworks, but also the Serpentine deviation, the Margaret River bypass and upgrades that are well overdue on Muirs Highway and Mowen Road. That question might have to be taken on notice, but I am keen to get the time frames and forward estimates for all six of those roadworks.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: Mr Martin can speak about the Serpentine matter, but we will have take the other questions on notice.

Mr MARTIN: It has been recommended to the Government that the Serpentine and Peel deviation be built in the 2005 time period. It is the Government's endeavour to seek federal government assistance with that particular project. That will be the subject of a submission from the State to the Commonwealth seeking that funding. In order to give accurate and timely information about the other matters, I will provide answers by way of supplementary information.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Further to the point made by Hon Simon O'Brien about sections 6 and 7 on the Roe Highway, it appears to me that if section 6 is built on its current alignment it will be difficult to deviate section 7 so that it does not cut through Ken Hurst Park, and even to avoid coming straight in towards the Bibra Lake. Does the contract for section 6 have any flexibility for amending the alignment to allow for a deviation of section 7 if the review shows that that is required?

Mr MARTIN: The expression of interest has been released for stage 6, and when the short-listed companies are identified, they will be asked to tender a proposal for the construction of that stage. I do not expect a contract to be awarded until the middle of next year. There is flexibility in the period leading up to that time. At this stage we are going down the path of building within the current road reserve. The minister has indicated that she

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expects stage 7 to be built but she wants to be able to decide exactly what its alignment will be. The intent is that we do not enter a contract for stage 6 that will cause difficulties with stage 7.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I refer to works in progress on page 882 of the *Budget Statements*.

Hon Ken Travers: Works in progress sounds like one of your speeches.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: My speeches, my son, are unfinished gems.

The total cost of the Great Eastern Highway to Orrong Road bypass is an estimated \$55 million, and \$3.3 million has been spent to 30 June 2001. There is no figure in the column for estimated expenditure for 2001-02, and the Government has told us that if there is nothing in the forward estimates, then it is not in the program. There are no forward estimates so I would like to be assured that the upgrade of the Great Eastern Highway to Orrong Road bypass is on the program. When will it be met? I remind the minister that the Treasurer raised his right hand and promised that it would be met within the first term of this Government.

Mr MARTIN: This project is on the Great Eastern Highway which is a national highway. Consequently, it must be funded by the federal Government. At this time there is no funding for that particular work.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Is it not on the program?

Mr MARTIN: No, it is not.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I refer to page 884 of the *Budget Statements* and specifically the Tonkin Highway extension. Has the Government made any progress in the budget towards meeting its commitment to complete the southern extension to Tonkin Highway to Armadale Road by 2004, and to Mundijong via the South Western Highway by 2006? As a result of this extension, when can residents in the East Metropolitan Region expect to benefit from a reduction in heavy haulage vehicles on their local roads?

Mr MARTIN: The Government's commitments for 2004 and 2006 are in planning. We are proceeding with land acquisition, environmental clearances and preliminary design, and we anticipate meeting those time targets.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I have a two-pronged policy question. The first is regarding the Albany Highway-Serpentine link to the south west, which has been a bone of contention. I note the first dot point on page 869 which refers to a road system that provides social and economic benefits. Has progress been made on that severe bottleneck, because the prospect of diverting that traffic into Armadale and out again is patently absurd. Has any forward planning been done in the context of the first dot point which refers to safe, economic and efficient movement of goods?

The second issue relating to planning, is that it is stimulated by the report that there may be an experiment - I call it a flirtation - with the state shipping service into the north. Are there any shortcomings in the road system in the north that provoke the thought of providing a shipping system again? In other words, could that system do something that the road network cannot currently cope with?

[3.20 pm]

Mr MARTIN: I think the member is referring to what is commonly known as the southern link road through Jarrahdale. A number of studies have considered alternative routes for that connection. Those studies have been presented to the minister, who wishes to have those options considered as part of the freight network review which she has initiated. From that freight network review, I anticipate a conclusion about the future of that route. It is fair to say that any of the road solutions would be very expensive, which will present some difficulty in funding by the Government. The second question asked by the member was about coastal shipping. My appreciation of the minister's view is that increasing the amount of shipping may reduce the wear and tear on the road system in the north of the State. I do not believe that the road system is so deficient as to require that action. It is more a matter of trying to minimise the wear and tear on the road system.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Page 97 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* refers to the expansion of the network of dedicated cycleways in Perth and regional centres. How is that project progressing, and what is the ultimate aim of that initiative? How will the Western Australian public, and particularly the cycling public, benefit from this wonderful initiative?

Mr MARTIN: The responsibility for the cycle plan is split between Main Roads and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. Page 883 of the *Budget Statements* shows funding for stage 1 of the Perth Bike Plan of \$5.73 million for this year. It is proceeding, although I believe the cycling fraternity want it to proceed faster than it is. Subject to the availability of funding, good strides are being made. It is a Main Roads and a government policy that bicycle paths are included in the project cost of major freeway links, and are not

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separately funded in the Bike Plan. Thus more is being spent on bicycle paths than necessarily shows in the budget papers.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Is the aim that bicycle paths will be available within 750 metres of every home?

Mr MARTIN: That is the general aim. It would require substantial additional expenditure over time to achieve that, but the aim is to make cycling a viable alternative for short trips.

Hon B.M. SCOTT: My question has been already partially answered, and relates to the Fremantle eastern bypass. I refer to page 870 of the *Budget Statements*, under the major decisions made since the last budget. What is the current status of the road reservation? Will the Government be selling off the reservation if it is lifted when the metropolitan region scheme amendment is done? What funds will be saved and, more importantly for Fremantle people, will funds be spent to upgrade an alternative route to connect with the Fremantle-Rockingham highway and the port? Is the upgrading of Stock Road planned; if so, at what cost?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: I prefer to take that question on notice, except for the first part, in which Hon Barbara Scott asked about the status of the road reservation. Mr Martin can provide some information on that.

Mr MARTIN: My understanding is that the reservation is still in place, and is subject to the freight network review, which will consider alternative routes giving access to the port.

Hon PETER FOSS: What was the cost of the Windan Bridge, and the duplication of the Narrows Bridge? There is a railway bridge alongside the Windan Bridge. What was the cost of that?

Mr MARTIN: I can answer part of the question. The Narrows Bridge project cost \$49 million. I do not have to hand the figures for the Windan Bridge or the railway bridge that crosses the Swan River. That information can be supplied through supplementary information, if the parliamentary secretary agrees.

The CHAIRMAN: The parliamentary secretary has agreed that that information will be provided by supplementary information.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: As Main Roads is responsible for speed limits on main highways, I have a question about the new Dawesville deviation, south of Mandurah. This deviation has just been opened, and it is a magnificent stretch of road - a four-lane dual carriageway. It has controlled access, and is fenced on both sides where there is bush. The speed limit on that section is 90 kilometres an hour. At the end of that section, travelling south, the road reverts to two lanes, which is much less safe, and the speed limit suddenly increases to 110 kilometres an hour. There is no logic in this at all. Why is the speed limit in the new Dawesville deviation not 110 kilometres an hour?

Mr MARTIN: I cannot comment on the specific criteria that were used to decide the limit, but I know there is some concern about traffic movements in that area, and the fact that it is a relatively built up area. I presume, subject to my checking, that that is the basis for having a speed limit lower than the maximum.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: I will take the question on notice to obtain the specific detail.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Is it correct that the previous Government estimated that an all-weather sealed road between Karratha and Tom Price would cost in the vicinity of \$240 million? In view of the fact that the Government has allocated \$120 million over several years to that road, can the parliamentary secretary explain what quality that road will be? Will it be a double-lane, sealed all-weather road, or something less than that, bearing in mind the significant variation in the costs between the estimate of the previous Government and that being spent now?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: I thank the member for the question, and ask Mr Martin to respond.

Mr MARTIN: The estimated cost of a completely sealed road between Karratha and Tom Price is in the order of \$250 million. This Government has made a commitment of \$100 million, which will fund two of the four stages of the road - the stage north from Tom Price and that south from Karratha. The two stages in the middle remain to be completed.

Hon N.F. MOORE: What will be the quality of the roads in the two stages that have been committed to? Will they be double-width, sealed, all-weather bitumen roads?

Mr MARTIN: It will be a single-carriageway, two-lane sealed all-weather road.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to the item on page 884 of the *Budget Statements*, in relation to the South Western Highway between Donnybrook and Bridgetown. Could the parliamentary secretary please provide an update of the progress of that road?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: We do not have that information available, so that question can be taken on notice.

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[3.30 pm]

Hon N.F. MOORE: I ask a further supplementary question: what is the distance involved in the sections to the north of Tom Price and south of Karratha?

Mr MARTIN: The stage that runs north from Tom Price to the Nanutarra-Munjina road is 22.5 kilometres and the estimated cost of that project is \$20 million. The other stage, from Karratha to Curlewis, is 89.8 kilometres and will be completed at an estimated cost of \$80 million.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I suspect that is about half the total length of the road.

Mr MARTIN: Yes. The total length of the road is about 267 kilometres.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: My question follows from one asked earlier. It was indicated that the Government proposed to delete the reservation for the Fremantle eastern bypass, which would mean that stage 9 of the construction of Roe Highway from the eastern bypass to Stock Road - a major north-south transit route - would not proceed. If that were so, traffic from north of the river would not be able to proceed by that route. I will stand corrected if that is not the case. The Government would obviously not be so irresponsible as to abandon that long-term planning decision without being able to say what it will do with that traffic and how that traffic will cross the river at Fremantle to get to either Stock Road or the Kwinana Freeway. What plans does the Government have for that traffic if the eastern bypass is deleted?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: I thank the member for the question. That matter will be subject to the minister's plans for the freight network review. It will no doubt be considered during the review.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Has the Government decided to delete the eastern bypass?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: The future contingencies for that area will be subject to the review. If the member seeks more precise information, I will take the question on notice and seek advice from the minister.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I would appreciate the parliamentary secretary taking my question on notice.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Is the sale of the land from the eastern bypass included in the forward estimates of this budget?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: No.

The CHAIRMAN: If there are no further urgent questions, this division will draw to a close. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the officers for their attendance and assistance.

Sitting suspended from 3.33 to 3.50 pm