

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Motion

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.24 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house commends the McGowan Labor government for its commitment to delivering transport and infrastructure projects and supporting thousands of local Western Australian jobs and local businesses.

I wish to speak on an area of great importance, not only to me, but also to the many residents of the South Metropolitan Region and beyond, who benefit from the McGowan government's key infrastructure projects. The importance of building infrastructure to keep up with the growing demands of our community is paramount. Transport and infrastructure projects better the lives of everyday Western Australians while supporting thousands of local jobs and businesses. These projects were our government's election commitment, and it is evident that only a Labor government understands the importance of delivering transport and infrastructure in our state.

Public transport is a vital artery of every liveable city around the world. Millions of people commute on public transport every day. I do not mean to be too critical of the other side, but it is hard to speak on this topic without mentioning the impact that neglecting infrastructure and transport has on people's lives. I say this not just as a member of this house, but as someone who spent 20 years living and raising my family in the outer south metro suburbs. Living just off Armadale Road near the Russell–Gibbs freeway exit meant I had firsthand experience of what happens when governments do not invest in these services. For years I watched the outer suburbs of the South Metropolitan Region being neglected. It was an unnecessary source of strain and stress that those living in outer suburbs were just expected to live with.

I am so pleased to see that this government recognises the importance of infrastructure and has consistently delivered vital public services for people in Western Australia. Public transport is a key piece of infrastructure that we recognise is the only option of transportation for many people. We have seen petrol prices rising quite rapidly in recent months, which has made it increasingly difficult to drive, particularly for those who live in the outer suburbs and have greater distances to travel. One of our projects helping with transportation in the outer suburbs is Metronet, a commitment that the McGowan government has made tremendous progress on. Even during COVID, which as we all know has been challenging across our economy and sectors, we have continued to deliver on our commitments.

Earlier this year, the McGowan government reached a major milestone on the Thornlie–Cockburn Link by removing three kilometres of track from the existing rail corridor between Cockburn Central train station and the Glen Iris tunnel to make way for the new and eagerly awaited Thornlie–Cockburn Link tracks. This massive feat involved over 500 personnel. In just 20 days, more than five kilometres of new track was laid, 7 500 concrete railway sleepers were re-laid and 112 masts were installed, which included six kilometres of wires as part of the new overhead line equipment. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the workers for braving the heat and completing these works in such a short period of time. Not only did they work around the clock building the new tracks, but Metronet workers also ran thousands of rail replacement buses along the line and converted the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre into a major pop-up bus station to get people to their destinations. These works are a major step forward in delivering the Metronet Thornlie–Cockburn Link and creating 1 600 jobs.

Another component of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link that is underway is the construction of the Ranford Road Bridge as well as the Nicholson and Ranford Road stations. When the 17.5 kilometre Thornlie–Cockburn Link is complete, passengers using the Ranford Road station will be able to travel to Perth in just under 30 minutes. This will cut down travel times for those in surrounding areas and make public transport more accessible.

In 2022, we announced that we would widen the Ranford Road Bridge from four to eight lanes, with six general traffic lanes, two bus lanes and a shared path on each side. The new bridge will be longer and higher to futureproof the rail corridor, and is an important part of our plan to reduce congestion, connect our suburbs and support local WA jobs and local businesses. Last year we installed the largest tee-roff beams ever manufactured in Australia on the new Ranford Road Bridge. These beams were manufactured by a local WA company, the Georgiou Group in Hazelmere, proving once again our commitment to supporting local jobs through Metronet and other transport projects across WA.

In the South Metropolitan Region, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link will revolutionise the way people travel in the same way that the Perth–Mandurah line did by providing people in the southern suburbs with a reliable, efficient and viable way to commute.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, for her grit and determination to deliver on Metronet and other infrastructure projects. It is interesting to note that Minister Saffioti received praise from a member from the opposite side of this chamber, Hon Steve Thomas. On 16 February 2022, he said —

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

If we look at the pipeline of infrastructure that the government is building, it is significant. I will give credit where it is due ...

Honourable member, I wholeheartedly agree with you. I am sure the member will agree that Minister Saffioti, in her capacity as Minister for Transport; Planning; Ports has been a major reason our infrastructure pipeline is so significant. For some comparison, I note that on Seven news in March last year, the Leader of the Opposition, Mia Davies, described Metronet as a vanity project. I think the Leader of the Opposition and I have vastly different definitions of a vanity project. To me, perhaps a palace on top of a hill not far from where I am currently standing would be one. I do not consider adding new train lines and stations that will be used every single day by the people of this state and change the way we travel as a vanity project. Just like Minister MacTiernan, Minister Saffioti has proven that Labor governments understand that train lines are important infrastructure for Western Australians. That is in stark contrast to the Liberals who we know do not have a good, excuse the pun, track record. They promised the Thornlie–Cockburn Link in two consecutive state elections—2013 and 2017—but never delivered. Who can forget when the Liberal Party scrapped its plans to build this train line at the last minute, leading up to the 2013 election just because it thought it would win the seat of Southern River anyway?

I refer to a 2015 article in *The West Australian* by Gareth Parker. It referred to Mr Abetz’s attempt to lobby the Liberal government for the Thornlie–Cockburn line in the lead-up to the 2013 state election. The former member for Southern River was quoted admitting, “I think they figured out the polling showed I was doing extremely well.” Just because someone is re-elected or thinks they are going to be re-elected is no reason to give up on the infrastructure Western Australians need. At the very least, they should not be going against the direct interests of the community they have been elected to represent.

I am proud to say that I am part of a government that focuses on long-term planning, not just winning the next election. We understand that whilst doing these projects, there will be temporary inconveniences. The closure of the Armadale line is part of our long-term plan for Metronet, with the 129-year-old line being transformed through three major infrastructure projects. The first of these is the Byford rail extension, where we will see the current Armadale line extended to a new station in Byford, and the rebuilding and elevation of the Armadale station. The second of these projects is the Victoria Park–Cannington level crossing removal. As part of this project, we are removing up to 12 level crossings between Victoria Park and Cannington stations and elevating the rail line at these stations as well as building four new stations at Carlisle, Oats Street, Queens Park and Cannington. Although we have tried to avoid disruptions on any line, it is necessary to close the Armadale line so that we can deliver this important infrastructure. The department considered other options for the train line closure; however, the 18-month closure from the first quarter of 2023 to mid-2024 was deemed to be the shortest time frame and the safest option for construction workers. Residents are being given 12 months’ notice of the closure so they can plan their travels in advance. Although we understand that the shutdown will be incredibly disruptive, we announced the closure in advance to give locals plenty of time to prepare and work out alternative travel options. As we know, when the Liberals close train lines, they do it on a permanent basis. I am sure that a few in this chamber recall the Liberals closing the Fremantle line 40 years ago, and without any notice. The closure resulted in a major public backlash, with the Labor government reopening the line within six months of being elected. That is because Labor governments understand the importance of infrastructure.

The third major project as part of the Metronet transformation of the Armadale line is its connection to the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. Almost a month ago, we officially opened the High Street upgrade project. This was something that we listed as a high priority when we came into government in 2017. Members will recall that we made a commitment to use funding from the failed Perth Freight Link project to deliver a contemporary solution for Perth freight links and congestion.

We have got on with these major job-creating congestion road projects and delivered on our promise. As mentioned from the 2017 election, our government listed six high-priority infrastructure projects in the South Metropolitan Region—the Murdoch Drive connection, the High Street upgrade and the Kwinana Freeway northbound widening between Russell Road and Roe Highway to reduce congestion in an area of the freeway that was an absolute bottleneck. The Armadale Road to North Lake Road Bridge is the centrepiece of an unprecedented program of congestion relief in Perth’s southern suburbs. The Liberal government never delivered this promised project and it took a McGowan government being elected before the new \$237 million bridge was finally delivered. I remember campaigning for this infrastructure when I ran for the seat of Jandakot in 2013. I recall the former member for Jandakot Joe Francis saying, “It doesn’t matter whoever wins the election; whoever wins the election will build it.” Well, Joe, the new bridge addresses congestion at the Armadale Road, Beeliar Drive and Kwinana Freeway intersection, which had been the third most congested intersection in Perth. This bridge is also the first in Western Australia to use “duck and dive” technology, a design that will ease congestion and reduce noise for residents. We have also delivered upgrades to Karel Avenue to reduce congestion and facilitate the construction of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. We have delivered the Kwinana Freeway smart freeway northbound. Smart freeways are an innovation in the way we

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

think about infrastructure, ensuring we use our existing roads as efficiently as possible. These projects have successfully delivered on local jobs. The High Street upgrade delivered 500 jobs; the Murdoch Drive connection, 700 jobs; the Kwinana Freeway northbound widening, 340 jobs; the Armadale Road–North Lake Road bridge, 1 400 jobs; the Karel Avenue upgrades, 150 jobs; and the Kwinana Freeway smart freeway delivered 100 jobs. The grand total is 2 853 jobs.

Another important announcement made by the McGowan government is that it will make public transport more affordable by introducing the two-zone fare cap. From 1 January this year the McGowan government has delivered on a key election commitment to cap public transport fares at two zones. For some Western Australians this can mean up to \$3 000 per year in savings on public transport alone. We are not only undertaking one of the biggest investments in our public transport system through Metronet, but also making it more affordable for people to access. The McGowan government is committed to making public transport more affordable because we know these policies are important for many people living in the outer suburbs. Living in the outer suburbs is often the only affordable option for many people; however, nobody should be penalised for where they live with an infrastructure void. We need to ensure infrastructure caters to everyone in WA. Our state is constantly changing and our infrastructure needs to change with it. It is important that we deliver today the infrastructure needed for tomorrow. We can trust that the McGowan government will remain committed to delivering transport and infrastructure projects, and supporting thousands of local WA jobs and businesses because building infrastructure and transport is in our DNA!

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [11.41 am]: I am actually surprised that the honourable member who moved this motion—I think it is a motion worthy of consideration and debate—was not supported by any of her colleagues. I am not sure whether that indicates —

A government member interjected.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: You will get your turn, champ!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin): Members!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I think I was five years old. I was not responsible for that decision.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, please direct your remarks through the chair.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I was staggered because ordinarily a motion such as this would be met with the enthusiastic support of government members. I think this is an important motion. It discusses matters of infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure, investment in the state. I absolutely agree that it is an issue that should occupy our focus. My counterpoint, or perhaps counterfactual, to the tone of the contribution, however, is that if the government wants to claim the upside benefits from making these decisions, that confers a degree of absolute responsibility for project delivery within budget, within scope and within promised time lines.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Like Princess Margaret Hospital for Children.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: They have woken up! That is fantastic.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thank you very much for the protection. There was a claim not inferred but made quite boldly that it is only a Labor government that understands the need to spend money on infrastructure. Let us be sensible in this chamber. All responsible governments in this state's history, and in this nation's history, have made investments in infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure. The long-term average of capital investment in Western Australia over the last 20 years—there is some fluctuation—is around 12 to 12.5 per cent of all money spent by state governments. I think there was a claim that the first COVID budget, delivered in late 2021, was the biggest spending infrastructure budget in the state's history. I recall asking a question of Treasury officials during the estimates hearing that immediately followed that budget about whether that claim was justified in real terms or in nominal terms. The answer was that it was just a nominal claim. Natural inflation actually gave the government the means to make that claim in dollar terms. It did not reflect an underlying structural uplift in infrastructure investment.

Let us deal with these topics in an economically sensible way. Of course the government is going to support its own project. Prior to COVID, the one project that defined this government's reason for being was Metronet. It is something that strangely we have not heard much about in this chamber, and that is why I was genuinely surprised that the honourable member was not met by more support from her colleagues. I am glad that we have brought focus back on Metronet in this chamber, because it used to be a topic about which members opposite in the previous Parliament would fall over themselves to spruik, well ahead of any investment being made, jobs being created or track being laid. Their level of enthusiasm reflected but was absolutely outpaced by the volume of media statements

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

that emanated from the Minister for Transport's office. I lost count on the number and was absolutely staggered to find that according to an editorial in *The West Australian* of 23 February there have been 442 press releases made directly about, or largely adjacent to, Metronet. I do not think there has been a single project in this state's history that has been subject to more promotion than Metronet, and it is a degree of promotion that completely outstrips any practical reality that one can observe on the ground—absolutely. It is much heard about—never visible!

I might read in this editorial because it should focus the minds and perhaps provide an opportunity for members opposite. What has happened in the relationship between *The West Australian* and the government over recent months is strange. The tone of the editorial sort of matches the tone of a Taylor Swift album release; this is a breakup letter of some kind. I will read in the editorial entitled “Why Metronet announcement failed a basic transparency test after 442 press releases” and dated 23 February —

The McGowan Government certainly has a knack for surprise announcements. This time, it's got nothing to do with the COVID-19 outbreak.

On Sunday, Premier Mark McGowan and Transport Minister Rita Saffioti revealed the Armadale rail line would be shut for up to 18 months from the start of next year so Metronet upgrades could be carried out. The upgrades include elevating parts of the rail line to enable level crossings to be removed, and extending the line to Byford.

The announcement was a bolt out of the blue, not only to the public but also to the mayors of the affected councils in Perth's south-east corridor —

I imagine those very mayors would take a great interest in the delivery of these projects in their local government areas. They were not consulted about the long closure. More to the point, on top of that —

A government member interjected.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: The member did not bring in his toy train today. He should have done that.

The editorial continues —

On top of that, the Government is spending almost \$2 billion to do the Armadale line works alone, which is almost half of the \$3.8 billion that WA Labor priced it at in 2013.

That is the issue. The economics of this project need to be scrutinised. I do not think we have given enough attention to this particular issue in the last 12 months, but the member has encouraged me to turn my mind to it. There have been a series of blowouts in time, in scope and in capital expenditure. If government members want to claim the benefits and pat themselves on the back, if they want to claim responsibility for the upside, I am sorry, but to balance that equation, they have to accept responsibility when things go awry. Overall in capital terms, the project is probably a quantum of two or three times what the government initially priced it at in 2013 or 2017. I do not have to read it; I do not have much time left, but I will identify one aspect. I will refer to another article from *The Weekend West*, written by journalist Daniel Emerson on 11 February 2017.

Several members interjected.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: He is not a journalist anymore. Is he? No; he is not. Good for him; he has moved on! He presented in *The Weekend West* article a Metronet pie chart. I will table this at the conclusion of my speech. It was a pie chart of where all the money was going to come from. Nine per cent of the overall Metronet project was going to come from value capture and developer contributions of \$267.1 million, and there would be land sales of \$667.1 million, which, together, comprised more than one-third of the capital required to deliver the project and the scope that it was.

The “value capture” was this sort of mythical thing that was never going to be delivered, or delivered on the never-never. I remember directly asking the Metronet project officer, a great public servant by the name of Mr Anthony Kannis, when we would ever see the value capture contributions. He smiled and winked and indicated that they were never going to come—not within the terms of this delivery and perhaps not for 30 or 40 years hence. That is probably a good number because members on that side seem to be fixated on the past. I endorse members on the opposite side bringing issues of substance to debate in this chamber. I am actually a little bit upset that we do not allocate another two or three hours to go through, line by line, all the Metronet costings, and reveal the blowouts in time, scope and budget. Hopefully, in this budget, we see the full operational subsidy that we will need to fund this white elephant as we go into the future.

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [11.52 am]: I love listening to my friend Hon Tjorn Sibma. It is very easy to criticise those who are doing something when the opposition's plans leading into the last election were minuscule, but I will get to that later.

I wanted to start by talking about what is happening in the North Metropolitan Region because I think it is important to talk about what is happening in my and the shadow minister's electorate. The McGowan government is doing

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

a lot for the North Metro Region. We are making it easier for residents to move around Perth, and we are cutting commute times significantly. I will talk about Metronet because we do proudly talk about Metronet, contrary to what was said in the chamber not long ago.

The Yanchep rail extension is going to extend the Joondalup line by 14.5 kilometres, from Butler right up to Yanchep, giving, in the future, an additional 150 000 residents of Yanchep, Two Rocks and Alkimos another way to travel around Perth. Extending the Joondalup line to Yanchep in a staged approach was first put forward in the 1970s. We know what happened then: rail lines were shut down and nothing ever happened, as my good friend Hon Klara Andric referred to. The McGowan government is well underway in delivering on this job-creating project, and I will come back to jobs later on if I have time.

I want to briefly touch on the three new stations that will be built before I address some of the comments made earlier. Alkimos station will serve a future city-scale central development. The station will include 600 parking bays and eight bus stands, and it will cut the journey to the city to just 41 minutes. This will create another public transport hub in the northern suburbs. Members will know that my electorate office is up that way, and I have often travelled from this place, which is close enough to the centre of the city, past my office, to Alkimos. I struggle to do that in just 41 minutes in my car, so this is a fantastic thing. The Eglinton station will be built just east of Marmion Avenue and will also be designed to support a localised community. The station will include 400 parking bays and eight bus stands, with a journey to the city of 46 minutes. The Yanchep station will become the heart of Perth's newest strategic business centre, with over 1 000 parking bays, 14 bus stands and a train voyage time of just 49 minutes to Perth CBD. To facilitate this, the Butler station will become a through-station, which is a station that allows for the travel of trains in both directions.

I am conscious of the time and I do not want to run out of it, but I want to address Hon Tjorn Sibma's comments. He wants to talk about Metronet and, as I said earlier, it is very easy to criticise us for what we are doing. We are the only government since Hon Alannah MacTiernan was Minister for Planning and Infrastructure that is actually putting anything significant into rail infrastructure. Hon Tjorn Sibma wanted to talk about Metronet and press releases, so I will do a bit of a comparison. I have a press release here from just before the last election. Hon Tjorn Sibma said, "Let's be sensible." So let us be sensible. Let us look at the Liberal Party's press release in 2020 in which it proposed spending \$10 million—members will know that \$10 million does not go far—in the northern suburbs for what was touted as a major roadworks and jobs initiative. This one is interesting: "Liberals to sink railway between Mitchell Freeway and Thomas Street as part of a bold plan". Hon Tjorn Sibma talked about value capture, and I distinctly remember that press conference. Hon Tjorn Sibma was there in the photos, half hiding behind his leader at the time because they were talking about a value capture in the billions. It was not costed; there were no costs attached to it, and even in the train wreck—pardon the pun—of a media conference that the shadow Treasurer did some time later, it still was not costed. There was absolutely nothing behind it. It was a stunt —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: The then shadow Treasurer.

Hon DAN CADDY: The then shadow Treasurer. It was an absolute stunt! There was nothing behind it. There were no dollars behind it, no costings behind it—nothing at all! Hon Tjorn Sibma knew it was a dog. He absolutely knew it; that is why he stood at the back in the press conference, and that is why when he was asked, his quote in this press release was —

"The Perth CBD—its Hay and Murray Street malls in particular—has been severely impacted by rising retail vacancy rates in recent years ...

That was it. He did not talk about the potential of sinking the rail line through the City West area. It was a fascinating plan because they wanted to sink it from City West to Thomas Street, then it would come up again before sinking back down to Subiaco. They wanted to do half a job, not doing any of it properly or in any costed way whatsoever. This is not the first time that Liberal Party members have not understood the economics behind, or the ramifications of, the decisions they make on anything that is done on the rail line. Hon Tjorn Sibma's plan had nothing on its predecessor. I have here a photocopy—I am happy to send it through—of *The West Australian* article published in Perth on Wednesday, 17 January 1979. I know Hon Dr Steve Thomas loves a bit of history in the chamber. There is a great quote here. Do members know what happened on that date? Hon Dr Steve Thomas would know; he was talking to us before about Roman times, so I am sure he would know what happened just 40-odd years ago. This is the day that Sir Charles Court decided he was going to close the Fremantle rail line. The article reads —

... there would be a public backlash for sentimental ... reasons but there was no justification for retaining the service.

This is the legacy of your party. This is what you always do. This is what the Liberal Party always, always does. As Hon Klara Andric said, public transport, rail infrastructure, building projects and building this state are in our DNA. That is the legacy of those opposite. This is 1979.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

Hon DAN CADDY: I will tell the member about the 1980s because that was when the Labor government reopened the line. We reopened it because we knew it was the right thing to do! Let us talk about the 2000s, when Hon Alannah MacTiernan was the minister for transport and she built a train line all the way to Mandurah. Do members want to talk? Do they want me to keep going? I am happy to talk all day about what has happened between 1979 and the present day. It is for sentimental reasons. My word!

I was going to give a quick update on what is happening in the northern corridor. I am just looking for my notes.

Hon Darren West: You went off the rails a bit.

Hon DAN CADDY: I did go off the rails a bit, thank you, Hon Darren West—but it is pretty easy to do so when looking across at this opposition. How many metres of track have Liberal governments built in the last 40 years? They have built eight kilometres. We are doing a single spur line that is almost double that. The Liberal Party built only eight kilometres of rail infrastructure.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: Hon Darren West, I have not even got time to talk about the country train lines.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: I am sure Hon Darren West wants to get into that.

Just a quick update on the current status of works. There is the Alkimos station. The promenade deck has been poured already. There is work happening. We are building things. Hon Tjorn Sibma said we like to talk about it, but there are time blowouts. Major infrastructure projects are difficult, but we are actually building this—we are building this! There is concrete being poured. There is track being laid. Eight kilometres of track—that is the legacy from the last Liberal government. As I have said, if we go further back, we see that the Liberal Party closed rail lines.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [12.02 pm]: Thanks to Hon Klara Andric for moving the motion, because it is an incredibly important project, particularly the public transport component. It is very, very important. As Hon Klara Andric said, it is very much in our DNA. I also thank Hon Dan Caddy for beginning some of this history. I am pleased to see that Hon Tjorn Sibma has been able to come back into the chamber. Normally we would not want to just focus on the past, but the really alarming thing I found about Hon Tjorn Sibma, who is certainly one of the more capable people on the other side, was that he is still in that same space that the Liberal Party has been in since the 1970s. It has an entirely unsophisticated idea about the development and functionalities of cities and the deep problems that occur when constructing cities predicated entirely on automobile dependence. I will certainly be letting Hon Darren West talk about the Liberal Party failures in our regional rail because there is just so much to say; it is really important. I thought it was extraordinary. I could not believe it. It was like back in the day. Who can remember Paul Omodei, the Leader of the Opposition in the other place? I think he used the same word. I think Hon Tjorn Sibma has been trawling through *Hansard* looking for some inspiration from past Liberal leaders, and he has found the term “white elephant”. That was the term that Paul Omodei often used in relation to the Mandurah rail line. The Liberal Party could not get it.

Now let me just go on. In 10 years’ time, Hon Tjorn Sibma might be back in government and I want him to understand the history of what has gone on here now. Hon Dan Caddy talked about the closure of the Fremantle line, and there were a couple of contexts to that. One was that the use of the rail system was declining; there was absolutely no doubt about it. Hon Tjorn Sibma would not remember what those trains were like. I used to see them put-putting along. They were diesel trains, and cars would zoom past them. Of course, not a lot of customers would be attracted to 1930s technology. Sir Charles Court got together with his mate Harold Clough—a big construction name—and came up with this great idea: “We’re going to close that railway down. We’re going to pull it up and we’re going to build this incredible freeway on the Fremantle line.” I have said this in Parliament before. This was an important galvanising thing for Labor because it really forced us to not just embrace an understanding of the individual components of the infrastructure, but also get on top of how cities work and look at the role of public transport and fast mobility in cities. I think we really started to understand. We very much became the party of public transport at that time.

When Labor took government in 1983, we ceremoniously reopened the Fremantle line. Far more important, though, was what we did next, which was to electrify all those lines—the Armadale line, the Midland line and the Fremantle line—and put in place modern trains that were able to move people between places quickly. The critical principle here is that public transport, the train service, must be competitive with the car if it is to attract customers. We made that investment. The next investment was, of course, the development of the northern line, the Joondalup line, during the tenure of the Lawrence government.

Then, of course, nothing happened. The Richard Court government was elected and there was absolutely zero investment in public transport. Notwithstanding various commitments, nothing happened during that eight years. After all that

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

activity over the 10 years of Labor governments, we got an eight-year hiatus when absolutely zero happened. The promised extension of the rail line to Clarkson never happened. Then we were elected. We were in government for seven and a half years, and we built the Mandurah and Thornlie lines and we extended the system to Clarkson. Of course, during the McGowan government, we have laid plans to go forward and have underway a massive program to expand that rail network. I really, really urge Hon Tjorn Sibma to learn from that history and to understand the perils of labelling that program a “white elephant”.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Did you close any lines during the period of the outreach government?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: What are you thinking?

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: From 2001 to 2008, you were transport minister; did you close any rail lines?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Well we certainly did not close any rail lines in the metropolitan area.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Oh, in the metropolitan area! Did you close any rail lines in the state?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Certainly not ones that we—of course, the member remembers something that I resisted very, very strongly. A Liberal government sold off the freight lines into the regional areas. I said that we would support that government in privatising the freight operations but not selling off those lines. Not only did that government sell off those lines, or gave a lease that was virtually a sale that allowed the private operators to close them down, but when the Liberals got back into government the last time, they made it worse because they revoked the one protection we had: the use it or lose it provision. They revoked that provision! Of course, we had no control over what was going on. Back in 1999 to 2000, I travelled around to all those wheatbelt towns and told people that this is exactly what would happen, and of course it did happen.

There are some white elephants that need to be talked about. The classic white elephant is the Perth Freight Link and the hypocrisy of Roe 8 and the Fremantle eastern bypass that was going to be built. In the early days of the Court government, it was going to build Roe 8 and the bypass, but come the end of its term, the election commitment to build Roe 8 and the Fremantle eastern bypass had not come to fruition. All it had done was to put it back into the planning scheme. We then got into government and we completed Roe Highway, which had been abandoned. We extended it up to Roe 7 and we completed Roe 7. The coalition got back into government again and said that it was going to build Roe 8 and the Fremantle eastern bypass. None of this ever happened.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.12 pm]: I also want to talk briefly about this excellent motion today put forward by Hon Klara Andric. What a refreshing member she has been to the house. It is great to have all our members on the government benches contributing so strongly to the important debates that we have daily in the house. Thanks to the member for bringing the motion forward.

I particularly want to touch on regional transport issues and the great work that the government is doing in regional Western Australia. In fact, no government has ever invested as much money into regional roads and transport infrastructure as the McGowan government. We are very proud of our record to the point at which we now have people ringing the office bemoaning the extra travel time required to drive through all the roadworks that are happening around the state. Naturally, it is a very good thing that we are spending so much on roads, but people are noticing all the investment that is going into regional roads. There have been some terrific projects. Every time I drive around the Agricultural Region and to and from Perth, I invariably see government investment into our road network and lots of local jobs. People appreciate what we are doing in the regions.

I want to touch on the issue of rail. The ramifications of the leasing out and closure of our grain freight network are being felt now. The decisions of the former Liberal government, and the Liberal government before that, are now coming home to roost. We have had a record harvest and farmers have delivered over 20 million tonnes of grain into the system. That system is now struggling to get that grain into the world market in a timely manner. No matter what we do over the next few months or years, we will still live with the legacy of the Court and Barnett governments’ dreadful decisions to remove transport infrastructure capacity from the wheatbelt. World prices have now lifted significantly due to events in other countries and we are unable to capitalise on those high prices because traders are not exposing themselves to the risk of falling prices. That means that we are now being offered a price between \$40 and \$60 a tonne less than the world market. This factors in the risk of traders being caught with grain that they cannot get through our port system or our transport infrastructure system and having to pay overs or high prices and making a loss. As is always the case, the farmer wears the consequence. Our grain prices are lower than that of farmers from other parts of the world. It is still profitable to grow grain at these prices, but we could be bringing more revenue into Western Australia. If members want to do that sum of around 20 million tonnes at, conservatively, \$40 a tonne, that is a significant amount of money that is not coming into our state due to decisions made by the Barnett and Court governments when it came to rail and road infrastructure investment. This is in contrast to our government’s expenditure on roads. We will certainly be investing in rail infrastructure, and I am waiting for an announcement from the minister about exactly how that will look.

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

It is imperative that as a government we make these decisions. I take Hon Tjorn Sibma's point on board: we try to pick winners, but these decisions will have implications in 20 to 50 years' time. Some dreadful decisions were made by the Barnett and Court governments that have impacted us significantly in the agricultural region. We are forever playing catch-up for the bad government decisions of the day that were also supported by the National Party. The closure of tier 3 lines was supported and defended by the National Party.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Hendy Cowan was leading the charge.

Hon DARREN WEST: I certainly think he was leading the charge on the lease, but I think the closure might have come a little later. I lay that fairly and squarely at the feet of former Leader of the National Party Brendon Grylls, who defended and tried to sell this position that we would be better off without rail. We knew at the time and we know now that we are not better off without the rail. We have all that capacity —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: The member knows that we want to fix this. He knows that we are making the investment. He will just have to be a little bit patient and wait and see where the government lands on investment into rail.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: There is already some allocated into rail. The member will have to be a little bit patient. I can tell members that the contrast is significant, as Hon Klara Andric pointed out. Whether it is in public transport in the metropolitan area or in road and rail investment in infrastructure for the long term and for those local jobs that they provide in regional Western Australia, this government is getting on with the job and delivering that transport infrastructure, and not just for now. I know that members opposite are very focused on 2025, but there is life after that. These projects will leave a lasting legacy. Farmers are out of pocket because of the failed policies of previous Liberal governments and we are determined not to repeat those mistakes.

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [12.19 pm]: I, too, stand in support of this wonderful private members' business motion by Hon Klara Andric and I have to say, representing the East Metropolitan Region and talking about transport, I could not go past the Morley–Ellenbrook Metronet projects. I live in Ellenbrook. It is a wonderful place to live. It is close to the Swan Valley, it has great schools and it has a really good, active community. The only thing that is lacking out there, and has been lacking out there, is good public transport facilities. I remember in the campaign for the 2008 election that the then Liberal leader Colin Barnett promised a rail line to Ellenbrook. That promise was broken. From memory, there was also promise of a fast bus service to Ellenbrook. I believe that was made by the Barnett government before the 2013 election; again, a promise that was broken. The McGowan Labor government has not only promised but is also delivering on the promise of a rail service to Ellenbrook. It is the McGowan Labor government's record investment that will see this dream come to fruition. In Ellenbrook, work has begun on the station. The station will benefit more than 40 000 people who live in the area.

A range of works are currently underway, including the preparation of the rail corridor down Tonkin Highway and the installation of rail bridges, with one recently installed over Broun Avenue. If members have been anywhere near Guildford recently, they will know that there has been stuff over at Guildford Road. Work will then commence at Whiteman Park. All those years ago when I first came to Australia, I never envisaged that there would be a train station at Whiteman Park, an area of natural beauty that is home to many native animals and is a tourist destination. It will have its own station. It is a station that will enable residents in Dayton, Whiteman and Brabham. For people who do not know, these are growing suburbs between Midland, Caversham and Ellenbrook. The rail line will give them direct access to not only Midland, but also the airport and the central business district. The Morley–Ellenbrook line will reduce public transport time from Ellenbrook by 50 per cent. That is massive—a 50 per cent reduction. It will also reduce the reliance on cars, which will help the environment in the whole area.

In Midland—again, Midland is in the great eastern metropolitan area—we are going to build a new train station. Not only will we build a new train station, but we will also ensure that this new station is located in an area where people will get easy access to not only the Midland Health Campus but also Midland Gate shopping centre. Construction is expected to start there in late 2022, with platforms to be completed in 2024 and associated works to be completed in 2025. We also talk about Bayswater in east metro. The Bayswater train station will be a hub, with connections to the Midland line, the airport line and the Morley–Ellenbrook line. Since we are talking about Bayswater, I could not go on without talking about the Bayswater subway bridge. Those people familiar with that particular bridge will know that it has an iconic status in the East Metropolitan Region. It is legendary as a traffic stopper, as a wedge that has caught out many a truck driver. It is not actually that low, it is just quite deceptive, and it does not matter how many signs, flashing lights —

A member interjected.

Hon LORNA HARPER: Yes, short and powerful.

Hon Klara Andric; Hon Tjorn Sibma; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Darren West; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

It has caught out many a truck driver who has been unable to determine the difference between the size of their truck and the very large sign that is on the bridge. We are unfortunately going to lose that icon of the Bayswater area; it will be replaced by a much higher bridge that will remove a bit of the wedge as well. It is such an icon that there is actually a competition going on with people looking at ways that we can say bye-bye to the Bayswater bridge. I encourage all members to visit the east metropolitan area and the beautiful and wonderful establishments down Whatley Crescent and in the Bayswater town centre. Go and visit them, then have a wee wander down to the Bayswater subway bridge before they cannot.

All these projects create jobs. Creating jobs is a huge investment. It is important that we ensure that we invest in not only the infrastructure in WA and in the metropolitan area, but also the people who live here by ensuring that we have jobs that are created here in WA and support other businesses here in WA that will support the people in Ellenbrook, Midland, Bayswater, Morley, Noranda and Malaga, as well as the people in Whiteman Park, Dayton and Brabham. All these projects are there because the McGowan Labor government is investing in the people of WA and investing in the future. These investments will really benefit the people in the East Metropolitan Region.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [12.25 pm] — in reply: Thank you, Acting President. Far be it from me to miss out on 60 seconds' worth of response time, which was a bit unexpected, but we expected a few more members of the Labor Party to enthusiastically jump up. I just wanted to comment on a couple of things, because there was great discussion in that debate about closing down rail lines and how terrible it was. By interjection, which was somewhat unruly, I asked the Minister for Regional Development whether she herself would actually ever close down a rail line, and I kept referring to Hon Darren West. I am asking still: who closed down the Greenbushes line, which at the time was actually running, delivering woodchips and other bits and pieces? The Minister for Regional Development, who was the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure back in 2004, closed down 100-odd kilometres of rail line. In the 2008 election campaign, she stood on the rail siding in Donnybrook and said, "We've got a new deal in place; we're going to open it up again! Look, everybody has jumped on board." Do members know what happened? Nothing. In my view, it was completely misleading, it was not true, it was a lie. The Labor Party also closes down rail lines.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.