

METRONET PROJECTS — TIME FRAME

Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house calls on the McGowan Labor government to take responsibility for the cost blowouts and lengthy delays besieging the Metronet projects.

I note the absence of the minister in the house. I hope she will be able to come along and offer some insights about why she is allowing these continual time frame and cost blowouts to besiege her pet project, Metronet. We know it has been going on for a very long time and that Metronet is a signature project for the Labor government. It is choosing to run very hard with it and much of the capacity of the state government is spent on it. Both the financial and construction capacity of our state is employed on the Metronet project and one could question whether that is the best way to be expending our money when we have critical housing shortages and one of the largest mining construction booms that we have seen in 20-odd years.

It is interesting that at one point we had what was called smoothing of projects. That occurred to enable a slowdown of public expenditure and to take some heat out of the market. The Premier announced the projects had been smoothed. I asked questions of the Premier around some of those matters and the smoothing of projects. I think at least two of the projects that were smoothed were Metronet projects. The Premier on 16 September 2021 confirmed —

I think around 16 projects have been pushed back, most by around a year or so, including two Metronet lines, from memory, and a range of road interchanges and some TAFE upgrades, but it is around 16.

The two Metronet lines that were pushed back were the Thornlie–Cockburn Link and the Yanchep extension. We know that the Yanchep extension had already run into trouble. There were reports in the media and it was common knowledge around the area that for some time little work had been done on the project. We saw in the budget there was about \$100 million of underspend on the project in that one year alone. That indicates a project that is in trouble for a range of reasons not only to do with project smoothing. Of course, it was a convenient way to hide what were real problems in the delivery of programs, primarily by the Minister for Transport, including some of these signature programs for the Labor government.

Surprisingly enough, in September 2021, we were smoothing projects because there was too much heat in the market. What happened between September 2021 and February 2022 to suddenly mean that there was no longer excess heat in the market and that there was spare capacity in the market? As far as I know, there was still mega construction of projects in the state's north. These projects are still on the backburner because we do not have the capacity to do them, yet in February 2022 the question asked to the Premier was again around his announcement that the Armadale line would be closed for 18 months for Metronet works.

Here we have an announcement of a project that he went on to justify —

The Armadale rail line has been in place for 131 years. Over that time, it has had some upgrades—not many—for instance ...

He went on to outline what was happening on the Armadale line. Basically a \$2 billion project had just been announced in the middle of a time we had been told the market was already overheated and we had to slow down. When the government was already unable to meet its targets and was already failing to get projects delivered such as the Thornlie–Cockburn Link and the Yanchep rail extension, the government announced a \$2 billion project in a market that was already overheated. We wonder why the inflation rate in Western Australia is the highest in the nation. Why is it the most overheated market in the nation? It is because the government is pouring millions of dollars into projects that are not time imperative; the money could be better spent when there is an inevitable slowdown in the private sector to enable the smoothing, if you like, if we are going to smooth things, of the construction tasks for the state. It could smooth out the employment for the workers so that there are projects to go to when things inevitably slow down in other areas.

We are not seeing that happen. We are seeing more and more money being pumped into projects that cannot be delivered in the time frames that have already been set down, not only in Metronet but in other major transport infrastructure projects. We know the Bunbury Outer Ring Road has been a shemozzle. It has been the most poorly costed and delivered project, I think, in Western Australian history. It has gone from a project of less than \$1 billion to one of \$1.5 billion if it was delivered in its appropriate form. It is now just a suburban road instead of a freeway. I mean, it is a disgrace.

In other areas, we know that the Minister for Transport likes to have some very heated and quite colourful answers to questions in Parliament here, much to the delight of the pack of Labor backbenchers who carry on and get a rush of blood and start baying like wolves. In fact, she does not answer the question. She did not answer the question today when I asked about the safety of the rail workers, the firefighters and the passengers on the Metronet

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Forrestfield–Airport Link. That project will be opening very shortly. As with any major project, there is a rush to get it done to meet the time lines. She has announced a time line, finally, after years of waiting. I fear that people's safety could be being put at risk. It is not only me. The firefighters are raising this issue. She mentioned she had worked with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and others, but why are the firefighters and the unions for the workers who are driving the trains also involved in this? Why are they raising concerns about safety in this environment? Who is trained in Western Australia to deal with a fire in a tunnel way down there on a train where we know there is very little space? Quite lengthy sections are underground, which is a unique situation in Western Australia. We would expect training to be sought from overseas from places in Europe and other places that have long tunnels so that we can perhaps gain an understanding. Instead of outlining to Parliament any of that or anything sensible, she turned her back to the Speaker and turned her back to me, who was asking the question, and played to the audience.

Anybody who sees that tape will see the disregard and arrogance the Minister for Transport shows to the members of this place when legitimate questions are being asked. I do not want to think that anything bad will happen on that network, but I would like to know that everything that could be done is being done to ensure the absolute safety of passengers and workers on that network, and also the firefighters and emergency workers who may need to respond to an incident in that unique environment in Western Australia. It is perhaps not unique in the world; I do not know, but I assume there are long sections of tunnels in other countries. Why did the minister not just outline what is going on?

It was similar when I asked her to outline for this Parliament a potential rise in construction costs. I asked her about a newspaper article that referred to a suite of Metronet projects and stated that the government's cost expectations had ballooned. I asked how much extra the government expects to spend to complete the suite of projects. She refused point blank to give me an answer. She said she is —

... delivering a ... number of infrastructure and projects throughout Western Australia including Metronet. What we do is to keep monitoring the projects.

In terms of reporting to Parliament when asked to put a figure on where she believed those projects are going, she refused to do it. This was the best I got out of her. She said —

... we continually monitor those. If cost pressures materialise and crystallise, we acknowledge that through the budget process and through midyear processes.

Just weeks after that little exchange it was revealed that there were huge cost blowouts because, as we know, the budget was brought down. This question was asked on 17 March 2022 when the budget was brought down and showed some significant cost blowouts. Instead of coming clean and answering a direct question on the matter, the minister once again chose to refuse to do so. I think the art of making theatre is being used as a cover for the lack of a commitment to ensure that a proper answer is given and an understanding shared about the situation with these projects.

The newspaper article I referred to in that question was by Josh Zimmerman on 27 February 2022 in which he outlined the cost blowouts he expected to see. He obviously had some sources who were a bit more forthcoming with some of the costs than the minister was herself when I asked questions about these matters. He wrote quite a lengthy article that ran right through from the conception of Metronet as a Labor Party policy in 2013 to its iteration in 2017 when Labor costed it at considerably less than it is now expected to be delivered.

Looking back at those times and how these cost blowouts have occurred, we are told that it is not just that costs have increased, but also that the scope has increased. That is fair enough. Some new projects are in there but the originally announced projects have not been delivered on time and on budget in any way, shape or form. In fact, those projects have blown out considerably. In 2017, the original construction costs of the Metronet project were around \$3 billion. It has been said in this house that we now expect it to be about \$10 billion. That is not being denied; it is becoming pretty clear to most people that with the current cost escalations, we will easily reach the \$10 billion mark, which is a 300 per cent blowout on what was originally announced back in 2017. In 2017, it was said to be a six-year bill time for a certain number of the projects—the first five projects, I believe. That was achievable, if not conservative. We are now five years along from then and none of the projects are yet operational, and an awful lot of projects have to come on line next year if the government is to keep to that original commitment.

This government also does not discuss the fact that the increase in train services and train availability is coming into a system that is not making a profit, but is making a loss. The PTA receives a huge subsidy; I think it is about \$1 billion a year, but I am happy for the minister to correct me on the subsidy if she comes in here. No doubt she has those figures to hand. I would like to know what we expect that subsidy will rise to as more services come on to the new train lines. Perhaps partly because of the pandemic and partly because of a trend that was emerging before the pandemic, passenger numbers on the train system are on the decrease, despite the fact that the government has slashed fares. It loudly trumpets that it has slashed fares to the two-zone system. That comes at a cost for the government. Multiply that out by the increased services and suddenly we have an uncostered commitment going

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forward that will become a budgetary problem for the government if the falling passenger numbers on the existing services do not turn around at some point with a good uptake on the new services. For instance, we know the Ellenbrook line has a construction cost in the budget, but the operational costs of that project for the next four or five years once it is finally delivered and the trains start to run are not in the budget. What is the long-term expectation of the burden that the state will carry in subsidising that service? The state government's budget processes for these matters seem very limited to me. If I were developing a long-term capital asset in a business environment, I would expect to know the operational costs and incomes over the lifetime of that asset so that I could understand the true project costs. That does not seem to happen with these projects.

We know that Western Australia has a fairly newly minted body, Infrastructure WA; yet, Infrastructure WA by its mandate and its legislation has no real impact on the Metronet program. It has had no involvement in the business cases and assessing whether the projects stack up because it does not look at projects that have already been announced. I think it would be very wise for the government to ask an independent body such as that to go back and look at the cumulative costs for the state going forward as we see this program start to run. We need to understand for future governments and future budgets the implications for everybody going forward with these projects. One implication that will be very interesting will be when the Armadale line is shut. The expectation is that the Armadale line, which has already been delayed, even before it has actually shut, will come into the election period. There will be a lot of angry people who cannot get to work very easily because road systems are disrupted and the train system is not running. Just as with every other project the government has undertaken, I expect lengthy delays and cost overruns.

We may well see the voters of those southern suburbs having to put up with a commuting nightmare because of the government's incompetence in bringing on a project at a time when the economy was already overheated and when the state really did not need another \$2 billion spent on a rail project—perhaps \$2 billion in housing or in the health system, but not \$2 billion on a rail project at that moment in time. It will add to the general pressure on the construction industry without any immediate, tangible outcomes because there is already a rail line to Armadale. I do not quibble with the government's commitment to put a train station in Byford, but that extension could easily have been done using the existing Armadale line at a fraction of the cost. That would have delivered on the government's commitment and spared the economy the pain of adding an extra probably \$1.5 billion for the remaining sections of the Armadale rail line that the government announced.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member will have an opportunity to talk later.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member will have his chance.

We know that this project, like so many other projects in the transport portfolio, has been subject to delay. Already it has been delayed by six months, and it has not even commenced; it is still in the planning phase. There is a systemic problem in that the projects never seem to meet the original time lines. The Forrestfield–Airport Link was originally scheduled to open in late 2020, and it is now late 2022.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I do not think it is running at the moment, member. Is the member seeking to interject? He will have his opportunity down the track.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Are you taking interjections?

Mr R.S. LOVE: No, I am not taking interjections. I have made that very clear.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member on his feet is not taking interjections.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you.

Mr T.J. Healy: Apologies. I was so excited to learn about the business case.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I call you to order.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you.

The Thornlie–Cockburn Link was originally set down for 2021. We know that has been smoothed, but it is a long way from being delivered. I will not put a deadline on it now, because the government cannot, but it is at least two years away. Yanchep was originally expected to be delivered in 2021—it was delayed in 2021, rather—but we have no idea whether it will meet its operational deadline which was, I believe, to be next year. I do not think there is any real chance that the Yanchep extension will be running at that time.

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The Morley–Ellenbrook line was another promise the government made. The government has often made a great deal about the failed attempts by previous governments to build a train line to Ellenbrook, but I will go back to the reason why there might have been some hesitancy around that. Perhaps it was not the best alternative for the area in terms of an immediate transport fix because the Ellenbrook line will not be operational for many years to come. There are probably pressures that need to be dealt with more immediately, but that was an election promise that the government made. We will simply critique the government on its ability to deliver on that election promise because the people have spoken and they have asked for the line. The Byford rail extension has been delayed because of the Armadale line. A whole range of other issues and projects have been delayed or cut back in that time.

Even very small matters seem to be incapable of being delivered. I went to the Caledonian Avenue area where I met with the local people some time ago. They are very disgruntled about the closure of the Caledonian Avenue level crossing, which was a \$15 million project delivered under the Metronet program as a government commitment. The plan was to close the level crossing. I understand the need for it, because the number of trains running through the area now is much greater than there was previously, and the level crossing gates probably would have been down for as much time as they were up. However, the government did not put in place an appropriate plan for dealing with the traffic in that area. The government closed the level crossing as a first step, but that should have been the final step in the program if it had been properly planned and delivered. Road and pedestrian alternatives should have been put in place and then the level crossing should have been closed, but the government did it the opposite way. It closed the level crossing and caused mayhem. Very concerning traffic accidents are occurring at some of the intersections in the area very regularly. I think there is actually a regular Facebook post now of the latest accidents at the Seventh Avenue–Guildford Road intersection. The government failed to plan properly for that project. The government closed the level crossing but did nothing about putting in place the treatments required to make that situation bearable.

When the Bellevue railcar facility was put in place, many businesses, locals, shires and members of Parliament, including even some Labor members of Parliament, expressed some concern to their constituents about the effect of the closure of Robinson Road, which was the road on which the level crossing was closed to facilitate backing new trains in and out of the Bellevue train centre. Surely the government could have designed that better. Now it has cut out one of the very few places in Midland where people can get across the railway line and has caused even more traffic chaos in what is an already congested area. The government took no note of the concerns of the local people. It did not try to work around their concerns or think of any innovative solutions. The government rode roughshod over those people, and that has left a very bitter taste in people's mouths and a legacy of poor traffic management in Bellevue for years to come.

While I am talking about the Bellevue project to deliver railcars, it has been said that it is a great job contributor. Jobs probably have been developed from building the railcars in the local area, although there is some contention over what is building and what is assembling. I think it is probably more correct to say that we are assembling bits and building a very small number of the components in Western Australia, but certainly some jobs have come from it. I am looking at a publication titled *Towards a national local content policy* from September 2022 that was put out by the Australasian Railway Association. The Australasian Railway Association is made up of all those users of the rail who run rail systems and perhaps own and operate the locomotives and rolling stock. They face a fairly unique market situation in Australia because pretty well every state has ambitions to have their own train building program. The problem is that that leads to having a very small market in each state, except perhaps the larger states of New South Wales and Victoria. Certainly for a state like Western Australia, the building of a project like that leads to having a lumpy supply of work because there is a very big commitment in the early part but it then moves to a maintenance program. There is no continuity of work when trying to deliver a project such as the railcar project within such a quick time line. I will quote from the publication to illustrate the point. It states —

The Metronet projects in Western Australia provide an example of the impacts of a state-focused LCP —
That is, local content plan —

For previous rail procurement under Transperth ... train sets were built in Queensland. However, for the latest Metronet procurement announced in 2019, a decision was taken by the ... Government that content had to be sourced locally. The project will deliver 102 new railcars (17 six-car sets) needed for Metronet projects and 144 railcars (24 six-car sets) to replace existing rollingstock.

The Railcar Program was identified as a strategic project under the WA Jobs Act 2017, which included requirements for local job creation and 50% local content for the manufacturing of new trains. Manufacturing of the trains is being undertaken at a state-owned facility in Perth. The plant was constructed by the state and delivery of the rail cars by the private sector is anticipated between 2022 and 2029.

It took seven years of work to deliver that rail stock. Further on it states —

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To comply with the local content requirements, industry participants were compelled to establish a local presence. Due to the relatively limited duration of the project, and the ‘lumpy’ nature of the supply chain, the requirement to establish a local presence did not allow for businesses to build a sustainable or efficient model unless there was already a presence in the state. Establishing a base in Western Australia for the purposes of bidding on this project was cost-prohibitive for many participants, limiting competition for the tender process.

I simply raise that to say that although a facility has been put in place that will undoubtedly create jobs, that document speaks of it being an expensive option to deliver railcars, not because it is wrong to deliver railcars locally in Western Australia, but because of the small nature of the market and no continuing construction work. The facility will be moving to a maintenance role, which will presumably provide it with somewhat less work.

I mentioned some issues that had been emerging out of Metronet over a while. I have only a few minutes left of my half an hour or so of contribution so that others can have a say. I know that other members want to talk about the issues that they see here. If we look at what has been reported over time in the press about Metronet, members will see a gradual build-up of issues as the project has developed. We expect those pressures to only get worse and that delivery of the projects will become more difficult in the future. I do not believe that the minister takes the expenditure of public money seriously. She has a cavalier approach to this project: if we can get the money from some other source, we will keep doing exactly what we have been doing instead of recasting and thinking about the timing and the method of delivery of the projects. That approach is now coming home to roost. I do not think that the practices employed by the state in delivering the Metronet program would be acceptable at any level in any private organisation. It is only in government, when other people’s money is being spent, that one can get away with what this minister has got away with in terms of cost blowouts and a laggard delivery of the programs throughout the nearly six years that she has been in charge of them.

We know that the pressures will increase as we come to the next election. There is arrogance on the part of the minister and this government in that they have not yet cottoned onto the fact that things are going to get tighter economically with the federal government. It will not be coming over the hill to save this government the next time the costs blow out. This state will be picking up the cost and the taxpayers of this state will then see just how woeful the delivery of Metronet has been.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [4.34 pm]: This Labor government has had since 2017 to deliver just one paying passenger to anywhere on a Metronet train and track. The minister has had over five years of repeated budget blowouts and excuses for constant delays. As my colleague has just made clear, the failures of the Minister for Transport need to be addressed, as called for by the motion before this house. I am going to go through in some detail the failures of the government in relation to this because we are hearing lots of glib statements from the minister on the other side who is pretending in some way that this program is on track—no pun intended. In fact, this major capital project, which amounts to half the government’s capital spend, is a monumental disaster. Then we have the minister’s failures. After five years, the minister and this government must own those failures. It has overpromised and underdelivered in this portfolio.

At the 2017 election, Mark McGowan promised that Metronet would cost only \$2.9 billion. He denied his figures were undercooked when he was challenged on it and he accused the then Liberal government of being shonky for suggesting that it would cost much more. Now we see that the overall budget for that project with some relatively minor scope changes is at over \$10 billion—over three times the original budget. I heard a member talking about business cases. I would love to see the reworking of the business cases when the project cost has been blown out threefold. As I recall, for example, the Morley–Ellenbrook line had a cost-benefit return of 1.1 and that was at its original massively underestimated cost. This is a King Kong-sized failure from a “swamp thing” Labor government.

Under Labor, we have a raft of issues across Western Australia. Our health system is near collapse, public hospitals are utterly overwhelmed, housing is unavailable—and there is more! Yet the government is spending over \$10 billion—half of its entire capital project spend—on Metronet. No stations, trains or tracks are available to be used by the public. Those funds could have built five new tertiary hospitals. Just one tertiary hospital would have made a dramatic difference to the health situation faced by this state. In a joint media release in February 2017, when the then opposition was pitching Metronet as an election project, the shadow Minister for Transport, Rita Saffioti, said that the Metronet costings process had been thorough and comprehensive and it would be world class and affordable. What a farce! The Labor shadow Treasurer, Ben Wyatt, also said WA Labor’s funding sources for Metronet had been credible and realistic and that they had used robust modelling. Quite clearly, that is patently untrue. We knew then and we see now that McGowan’s labour costings were completely wrong and completely underestimated. We only have to look across any Metronet project to see that they all have the same bad characteristics in common: they are delayed, over-budget and incomplete.

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Let us look at the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. In 2017, the estimated cost was \$474 million. In the 2023 budget papers it was \$880 million. That is a blowout of \$406 million under the Labor government and under this minister. In a media statement on 17 December 2019, Labor’s Minister Saffioti said that major construction was due to be complete in 2022 with the train services operating in 2023. Not long after, in a media statement of 16 November 2021, Minister Saffioti said that completion would be in 2024. Here we are again with a major cost blowout that is hundreds of millions of dollars over budget and a two-year delay.

I move now to the Yanchep line extension. The 2017 election estimate was \$386 million. In the 2022–23 budget papers, it increased to \$607 million. That is a project blowout of \$221 million. That project was supposed to be completed in 2021 with Metronet trains running in 2022. The media statement on 24 November 2019 said that major construction was due to be completed in 2021, with train services operating in 2022. Just one year later, we had a delay of another year. A media statement on 17 December 2020 said that construction was expected to be completed in late 2022. That has already been pushed out by one year, and clearly that is not going to happen. The most recent delay announcement was so embarrassing that the Minister for Transport let the Attorney General confusedly announce that the completion date would be changed. He said that the project would be completed at the end of 2023, but he did not know whether that would be December or January. Patently, January would be 2024, but the Attorney General did not appear to realise that at the time. That is another year’s delay, on top of another delay before that, so two years in total. Again, under this McGowan Labor government and Minister Saffioti, this project has had a huge budget blowout of hundreds of millions of dollars, and a delay of two years.

For the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the 2017 budget estimate was \$863 million. In the 2022–23 budget papers, the estimated cost was \$1.12 billion. That is a blowout of \$260 million on that project. The project was due for completion in 2022 but currently is not expected to be operational until the end of 2024.

Mr T.J. Healy interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is another massive blowout in budget and another massive blowout in time.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, are you taking interjections?

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, I am not, thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker. There is too much to get through.

Mr T.J. Healy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River, I call you to order. Please stop interjecting.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For the mythical Byford extension, the 2017 budget estimate was \$291 million. In the 2022–23 budget papers, the estimated cost was \$797 million. That is a blowout of \$506 million on this supposedly robustly modelled and costed project. Construction was due to begin in 2021. That has now been pushed out to 2023. I refer to a media release from the minister in May 2017, in which one of the dot points is —

- Building the Byford extension (Expected completion 2023);

That is another statement that again is completely misleading the public of Western Australian and the people who live in Byford, who are desperately keen for that line to open.

Let us go to the Forrestfield–Airport Link. This project was underway when the government came to power. The budget had been done, the equipment had been purchased and all the contracts had been signed. As the minister pointed out at the time, the equipment was being assembled for that project. In December 2018, a year and three-quarters after the minister had been in power, so she had had plenty of time to look at it, the minister announced that the Forrestfield–Airport Link time line has been revised and that the first trains were expected to run on that line in the second half of 2021. Maybe they were ghost trains. In that same media release, the minister said —

“Our primary focus is on safety and quality ...

“While the delay is unfortunate ... the time added to the construction schedule is a small price to pay to ensure we safely deliver this asset ...

I will go through that in a bit of detail. Labor needs to remember that the costing and funding for this project was approved by the then Liberal government in 2016. Can I say that, clearly, the Liberal government could make reasonable cost estimates for a project and provide sufficient contingencies. This is something that members on the other side should listen to and take to heart. This is pretty well the only single Metronet project that will come in on budget. That budget was prepared not by Labor, but by the former Liberal government. The former Liberal government was honest with the people of Western Australia about what projects would cost.

The original approved completion date under Labor was June 2020. It is now September 2022, more than two years on, and still no passengers are able to catch that train. We have heard that that line will open next month. We wait for that with bated breath. One of the highest passenger loads at Perth Airport is fly-in fly-out workers who depart

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from terminals 1 and 2. The first train will depart Perth station at 5.12 am and arrive at Airport Central station at 5.30 am. The proposed operating hours will be the same as for the wider rail network. That means that FIFO workers who catch flights at or before 7.00 am will not be able to catch that train to the airport. They may be able to catch the train home if they get back to Perth mid-afternoon, but in the mornings they will still have to catch a taxi or drive their car to the airport. It is very clear that it was easy for the now Minister for Transport to throw mud when she was electioneering, but she has utterly failed to deliver since she has been the minister.

It is now less than one month before this project is due to open, and what have we read in the paper? We heard those statements from the minister about the need to ensure safety. However, we have heard nothing but concerns about safety. The secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union WA, Joshua Dekuyer, has said that he fears that the Public Transport Authority will not take over from the project builder until potentially just days before the opening, and that the opening is being rushing due to political pressure. It is completely unacceptable that this project is two years late and the government still cannot get it right. This is not a time to be cutting corners. The government needs to listen to the concerns and take appropriate action.

I will go through some of the problems that have arisen on this line since the minister took it over. In November 2017, WorkSafe issued an improvement notice to confirm that all the pipe brackets and frames were fit for purpose. In July 2018, a 26-year-old New Zealand man was left in a critical condition after he was struck by a flailing hose. In September 2018, the PTA identified multiple safety breaches and failure to take action. On 27 November 2018, the CFMEU led a protest outside the Redcliffe offices of Salini Impregilo because of concerns about the project. In December 2018, the completion date of the project was pushed back from 2020 to 2021 due to flooding in a sinkhole. In March 2019, contaminated sand was found, which cost the project around \$300 million. In April 2019, a former tunnel worker claimed that he and two colleagues had suffered the bends while in hyperbaric mode beneath the ground, and a second former worker confirmed those allegations.

In May 2019, 500 metres of heavy piping in the airport tunnel collapsed. That had been predicted by the union, and it is demanding that all the brackets be replaced, so it has now become a WorkSafe matter. In June 2019, a worker stood in water containing a substance that caused burns to his feet. In August 2019, the exasperated Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union launched a social media campaign to alert people to all the problems with the project. In September 2019, there was a stand-off between the state and the federal government over contaminated dirt from the project. In November 2021, Salini Australia was fined \$200 000 and had to pay almost \$3 000 in court costs relating to the July 2018 incident. In July 2020, there were further delays because of the mobile phone black spot issue. What a litany of failures on that project by this minister.

Even worse is the politicisation of the Metronet project. We see that constantly from this Labor government. A prime example is what occurred last Father's Day weekend on the Metronet official social media webpage. That webpage should be utterly apolitical. It should have no place participating in the political process. Its purpose is to inform the public about Metronet matters. However, that social media webpage felt driven to share the following accolade on Father's Day —

Happy Fathers Day @MarkMcGowanMP, thanks for being the best dad there is.

What an appalling misuse of a public website.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Maybe those public servants felt compelled to do it. Maybe the nature of this government is that if Labor Party members do not overtly ingratiate themselves with the Premier, their career will be limited. I have heard that said in a few places. It is an improper politicisation, and I hope that the Public Sector Commissioner is looking at how that happened and why those public servants felt driven to do that. That website should be used only for specific communication about the Metronet project.

I turn now to Bayswater station. There are more delays. I have been reviewing the Building for Tomorrow website. Under the FAQ section relating to the shutdown, there is the heading —

What does this mean for the Airport Line?

It then states —

The Airport Line is on track —

That is a non sequitur, is it not? —

to open in 2022. However, services may be affected by the Midland Line shutdown and replacement bus services would be provided.

That is a fascinating statement, as I have said. It says “on track”. Nothing about this project is on track.

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We see further scheduling delays and disruptions versus the politically pressured stated opening days. Due to further delays with the construction of Bayswater station, the Forrestfield–Airport Link, having opened on 9 October, will be required to shut down again to facilitate the Bayswater station and Midland line works. It already has a massively delayed opening and the government is going to shut it down again because it cannot schedule projects properly.

The government cannot schedule the work to occur when the lines are shut down, and other projects are massively delayed as well. I think this is a major concern, and I hope the Minister for Transport is working on dealing with this. The Armadale line shutdown has now been delayed. After all the minister's glossy statements before the election, talking about the great work that the government was going to do, the closure will now be pushed back from early next year to late 2023, which clearly means that it is not going to finish until years later. If history is a guide, it will be pushed back further than that. That is an 18-month shutdown of that line, which is causing great consternation to the people who live in Armadale. The local council was even left in the dark about that, as there was no proper consultation before those announcements were made. The Armadale line will be completely shut down for 18 months, but, as I have said, we know that that is likely to be for longer.

At the same time, we have major works and upgrades of the Tonkin Highway. This was another project that was mentioned in the Auditor General's report about transparency concerns. We have the Tonkin Gap corridor and the Roe Highway to Kelvin Road widening project, with construction due to start in 2023, which is the same time that the Armadale line closes, so how will those poor people who live in the surrounding areas get to work? The train line will be closed and the major road will be closed.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: That area is experiencing major works. I know that the minister likes to talk in this place about astrology, so perhaps she could consult the gods and work out how the people who live —

Ms M.M. Quirk: You mean astronomy or astrology?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I mean astrology. Maybe she should have gone into astronomy; she could estimate time better! Maybe she could consult the astrological charts to work out how she will cope with the enormous shutdown of that line. It is going to cause a major problem for the people of Armadale who live in that region.

I will go on a little bit further and talk about Metronet issues and this Minister for Transport. One of the characteristics that we have noted of this government is the characteristic of secrecy. It does not like to tell us what is going on. I note that when I put in a number of freedom of information requests, what I normally get back is pretty much a blank sheet of paper. I get “and, but, said” left in it, but nothing that associates with actual information. In the majority of cases, we are not requesting overly contentious information; it is just information whereby we are trying to build a picture, but we do not get it back from this government. This government is obsessed with secrecy in a whole range of matters.

The Premier promised gold-standard transparency from his government, then later he clearly regretted that because he knew he could not maintain it. When he was under oath in the Federal Court of Australia, he said that gold-standard transparency did not apply to everything under Labor, and it certainly does not apply in the case of the disgraceful Huawei contract that the minister and this Labor government entered into. The Labor government and the Minister for Transport spent two years defending that contract when they should have been defending the interests of the Western Australian taxpayer. A very good article, “Labor cagey on Chinese telco”, by Paul Murray was published in *The West Australian* of Wednesday, 18 July 2018. He opens with —

The Chinese telco giant Huawei is under such a cloud internationally that any competent government in Australia would have second thoughts about doing business with it.

This matter was being raised early on by the press. It goes on to detail all the factors behind why the writer considers Huawei to be a very poor company to do business with for a critical communication network for the railway line. The article continues —

Premier Mark McGowan says the WA Government sought security clearance from Canberra, but the terms of any approval have not been made public, nor have any caveats ...

The government did not have just one red flag; the government had multiple red flags that it was utterly inappropriate to enter into a contract with Huawei for a critical piece of infrastructure, yet it continued to do so.

A memo was produced by the Premier's office in July 2018, which, according to my notes, states —

“DPC's concern was that technology provided by the —

It redacts a couple of things —

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Chinese (redacted) may not be able to support a level of security required to support potential future uses of the network, particularly automatic train control ... and public safety”

We cannot possibly have a foreign entity gaining access to a system that completely controls the trains. If we are in a conflict situation, it could disrupt that important transport network. That memo goes into some detail.

On 20 June 2018, the Minister for Transport signed a Public Transport Authority briefing note, which was prepared on 19 February 2018. It refers to onboard CCTV and the ability to look live into a train from a central monitoring room, and the ATC, which is a system for automatically controlling train movements. Imagine being in a situation in which there is the potential for a foreign entity to observe people, collect information and control the train.

In March 2018, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Public Transport Authority were so concerned about the security and financial risks, they evaluated a range of alternative approaches. The government had plenty of warnings, and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet had concerns, which were expressed, yet the minister ignored all those warnings and chose to enter into that contract with Huawei. The decision to enter into all those contracts despite all those red flags sits absolutely at her feet. What was the result of that? Taxpayers had to foot the \$6.6 million bill, which is the amount that had to be paid to Huawei for cancelling the contract. The minister ignored every sensible warning.

The minister released a media statement at 4.00 pm on Friday, 27 March—again trying to avoid any scrutiny by releasing a media statement late on Friday afternoon—so that it hopefully avoided all the weekend press and therefore public scrutiny. The minister said —

“We’ll continue to work towards the delivery of a high quality radio system at the best possible price for taxpayers.”

The minister entered into a contract that she should never have entered into. Meanwhile, prices have escalated dramatically, so it is not just the \$6.6 million that was wasted with Huawei. If we look at the estimate of that cost, we see that there is a substantial increase.

In June I asked the minister why this Labor government pursued the contract with Huawei despite all the red flags and advice it had received. The minister somehow invoked Donald Trump in her response. Again, it was an attempt to shift blame and look for a scapegoat. I am not just talking about the \$6.6 million. The contract was renewed at a 50 per cent higher cost, which meant that that every Western Australian taxpayer was hit. The cost of that part of the contract increased by \$122 million. The cost of the minister ignoring the advice is not \$6.6 million; it is in fact almost equivalent to \$130 million, because in that time the costs escalated so dramatically. That does not give me any confidence in the government’s ability to manage the capital appropriation. I think I have demonstrated in respect of every Metronet project other than the project that was budgeted by the former Liberal government that there have been massive blowouts in costs.

The contract has now been awarded, and obviously that was one of the things that held the project up. It is ultimately a \$327 million contract, based on an original cost of \$205 million. There was disclosure at the end that the minister delayed. Even being open with the public of Western Australia, she delayed by about six months before even informing us and the broader public of Western Australia. A low standard was set in relation to being open and transparent about that, and as I said, that really fits the pattern of this government. It does not have transparency in the way that it manages projects.

If we look at project delivery, the Auditor General—a fine public servant, who does her job fearlessly, and thank goodness she does—in her report on transparency in major projects raised a number of concerns about the Metronet project. With respect to my other members, I will not go through that in detail, but we have again seen the Auditor General outlining in detail the continued failures of this government. There have been blowouts on already blown out budget estimates going forward.

I will touch on one more thing, and that is “metrohubs”. Do members remember metrohubs? It was the golden dream; members opposite were going to provide first-class accommodation on railway lines through metrohubs. What did we see instead of metrohubs? We saw a government obsessed with deals for mates in the western suburbs, and not a single facility was built on any of the metrohubs. The metrohubs have disappeared completely.

Just imagine if members opposite had actually delivered on that project and delivered high-density housing around those station hubs how much less pressure we would now have on housing, particularly housing for people who cannot afford the expensive apartments that are being built in my electorate. Just imagine if the government had gone ahead with that project.

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It is unacceptable at every level. This Metronet project has been a disaster at every level. The government has consumed 50 per cent of the capital of this state on that project. It is not delivering on important, critical infrastructure such as Oakajee. It is failing the public of Western Australia and it is failing the commuting public of Western Australia.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.02 pm]: I rise to also support the motion moved by our shadow transport spokesperson —

That this house calls on the McGowan Labor government to take responsibility for the cost blowouts and lengthy delays besieging the Metronet projects.

I want to touch on some of the transparency issues and how consumers have been left behind on a number of occasions when it comes to this project. It is a signature project and a significant election commitment of the McGowan government.

The government has made lots of promises, accompanied by a lot of media statements, when it comes to Metronet. In fact, a quick search illustrates that over the last five and a half years, there have been at least 470 media releases that mention this so-called flagship project of the McGowan government. There has been 470 media releases and lots of promises, dreams and visions, but when it comes to the reality of what has actually been delivered in the last five and a half years, we see a project that is over-budget and behind schedule. We already heard the Leader of the Liberal Party talk about the issues with the Forrestfield–Airport Link, particularly the safety issues that have really challenged this project along the way.

It was extraordinary to hear the Minister for Transport in a radio interview trying to justify a two-year blowout in this project as being all about safety. I would argue that the time blowout on this project is more about the mismanagement of its delivery. My colleagues also spoke extensively about other cost blowouts and delays, and the absolute debacle that was the Huawei project. I touched on the fact that we have seen more than 470 media statements on Metronet, but there was veil of secrecy surrounding Huawei as a contractor, and the government and minister mishandled that failed and mismanaged contract, which was always going to be problematic given the red flags raised by the opposition and many other parties.

In addition to the significant time delays, safety issues and budget blowouts, another of the biggest failures of this government is the so-called gold-standard transparency that the Premier assured us he would deliver back in 2017. What a joke. No doubt it is a promise that he wishes he had not made in 2017. That line about gold-standard transparency has certainly become a comment he wishes he had not delivered in the heat of the 2017 election campaign. We would be hard pressed to find a better example of this government's cloak of secrecy and how it operates than the management of the Metronet project. We have seen blatant cover-ups and a disregard for accountability. It is extraordinary that this is being delivered on the back of another of the government's undertakings when it first came to office. When it first came to government, it undertook to scrutinise the previous government's operations. The *Special inquiry into government programs and projects: Final report*, also known as the Langoulant report, highlights —

Disclosure is a useful way to promote accountability.

...

Providing Western Australian taxpayers with open, honest and complete information through continuous disclosure about government projects is a useful way to promote trust.

However, this 2018 special inquiry was obviously nothing more than a witch hunt—that was certainly very clear—against the previous state government. Its recommendations were not adopted or acted on and, quite clearly, they were just ignored. Trust obviously was not a priority or a value of the McGowan government when it came to office, particularly in the transport portfolio. When we look at the record of major infrastructure and the government's flagship Metronet, we see there is a lack of transparency and a lack of accountability to Parliament and to the taxpayer. In the McGowan government's first term in office, we saw that the number of refusals to release information was greater in its first term of office than for the whole eight years under the previous government. That was information provided by the Auditor General. It is a damning reflection on this government's performance.

Mr T.J. Healy: Are you releasing the airport business case today? Are you going to table it?

Ms L. METTAM: It was in the Auditor General's report.

The Minister for Transport blatantly refused to release minutes of Metronet Taskforce meetings associated with the Forrestfield–Airport Link project, even after the Auditor General had found that the minister's approach was “unreasonable and inappropriate”. Instead, what was the minister's response? The minister created a special subcommittee of cabinet to hide all the Metronet documents, including these minutes, behind the secrecy of the cabinet, meaning Western Australians would need to wait another 30 years to see what these documents would reveal. These are documents that pertain to the very serious safety issues associated with the Forrestfield–Airport Link that have led to the significant delays that we have seen. It is in the public interest to know about these serious safety

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concerns. The minister went to extraordinary lengths, even on the back of comments made by the Auditor General, who found the minister's approach to be unreasonable and inappropriate. The minister ignored that and created a special subcommittee of cabinet, a cloak of secrecy. This is behaviour that we have become only too used to under this government. It is an absolutely shocking abuse of power.

There have been many more examples over the last five and a half years, such as the Armadale line closure. The transport minister casually announced an 18-month closure of the Armadale line from the start of next year. The closure, between Victoria Park and Armadale station, is expected to cause significant disruption. Over 20 000 boardings are currently reported each working day on that line. Surely something like this would have been flagged earlier. In any of the hundreds of releases prior to this announcement, where was the disclosure about this major disruption? Where was the justification for it? The public were not told, and I understand the local councils in the area were also blindsided by the announcement. There was no consultation about the closure and the impact it would have on the local community. The government went to the 2013 election with this project. It has been in the pipeline for almost a decade, yet, after almost 10 years of Metronet planning and spin, there has been no mention of this major disruption. As the editor of *The West Australian* said —

Was this long closure factored into the planning? If so, why the surprise announcement only now?

If not, has the Government pulled this closure out of nowhere?

Or did the Government not see this coming for some reason? Perhaps something unforeseen has happened or a mistake has been made?

...

The McGowan Government has failed a basic test of transparency if it has chosen to hide this until the last minute.

And if the closure has only just become necessary, people deserve to know why they will have to deal with this disruption for so long.

It is fair to say that this is a failure in the basic test of transparency.

This lack of transparency and absolute disregard for accountability was again highlighted in the Auditor General's release in June this year. This was on the back of a report she had compiled in 2020 recommending more frequent public updates on the progress of major projects, something we are yet to see. I quote from the report —

This reporting would satisfy parliamentary and public interest, promote accountability, and build community trust and confidence around the management of the State's significant investment of public money in major public assets. I note that the Department of Finance regularly reports to Government on the status of major projects and I have recommended this form the basis of regular public reporting. It is my intention to continue to periodically report and track a selection of major projects until Government fills the gap.

Clearly, this government has no intention of being open, honest and accountable to the public. We have seen that this week in the way that the emergency management bill has been handled in Parliament. It is evidenced in the costings and the scope of this project as well, and my colleagues have also touched on the costings and the underhanded way in which this project has been sold.

We have talked about the costings. In 2017, the Metronet project was costed at \$2.9 billion. It is now at least \$5.7 billion, and it is likely to blow out to about \$10 billion. That is a very different project from the one the government sold to the people as affordable in 2017. In February 2017, when pitching the \$2.535 billion project in an initial media release, the Minister for Transport stated, "The Metronet costings process has been thorough and comprehensive. It will be world-class and affordable." The shadow Treasurer said at that time, "WA Labor's funding sources for Metronet are credible and realistic. We have used robust modelling as well."

We know that the costings were completely understated, particularly given we are now looking at about \$10 billion. Other members have talked about the cost blowouts on these projects. We know they have been completely underestimated. The arrogance and incompetence of this government and the lack of consultation have already been mentioned. We have talked about the Armadale line closure, which was dropped on the public without consultation with local communities.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: I am not taking interjections. The minister will have her time.

The redesign of Bayswater station is another great example of the government's betrayal of the local community. The Bayswater community consulted with government in good faith, but the final design unveiled by the transport

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minister is nothing like what had been presented to locals during the consultation period. Despite months of community consultation —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Ms L. METTAM: I am sure the minister will get her time.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Minister! The member for Vasse has the call.

Ms L. METTAM: Despite the consultation process and the design and aesthetics that the community had been presented with, the community said the plan the minister presented was more like four trestle tables slapped on top of a freeway overpass. This station will be one of the first stations that our national and international visitors see. Instead of delivering an iconic entrance that seamlessly blends in with the community, the government is planning a concrete box. At the very basic level, it was impractical and dysfunctional. It is fair that we have heard significant concern from the Bayswater community about how it felt let down through the consultation process. All the very basics were ignored. It was impractical and dysfunctional.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: There were no barriers to protect commuters from the wind and rain on platforms. The design had a lack of escalators. That was an oversight and something that the McGowan government and the minister ignored despite the community calling for it. Travellers with luggage were expected to utilise stairs or forced to wait for lifts or lug it up two and a half storeys. The so-called final plan was impractical and a wasted opportunity to showcase the city. Future Bayswater then had to petition this government.

Mr T. Healy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River!

Ms L. METTAM: It had to petition this government, given the significant gap between what it understood would be delivered and what was promoted by the government. There was talk of escalators and they were not delivered. The fact that —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, the member is not seeking interjections.

Ms L. METTAM: I am not seeking interjections. There was a significant breach of the community's trust. The consumers of this project were clearly an afterthought. It is very clear that the government had very little concern about how consumers may feel when it presented a plan that was significantly different from what was presented as part of the community engagement.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: The interjections from the minister are not ceasing despite the member for Vasse saying that she is not seeking such interjections. I ask that you ask the minister to remain silent.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Minister, I will ask that you cease to interject for the remainder of the member for Vasse's speech.

Debate Resumed

Ms L. METTAM: Finally, after over 1 000 petitioners made a plea to Parliament, the government backflipped somewhat. The addition of a one-way escalator addressed only half of the issues, but what we saw was complete incompetence by this government and complete disregard —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Transport, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms L. METTAM: — for the community, which has been let down. Proposed layouts and the addition of a massive viaduct in the town centre also represented significant challenges. Documents obtained under the freedom of information process highlighted the government's attempts to delay and hide the true cost of the station. In communications between the Labor member for Maylands, Lisa Baker, and the Minister for Transport, it was revealed that the community was angry about what it stated was an inferior design, finish and quality of the proposed Bayswater station. We have already heard about the significant safety issues surrounding the Forrestfield–Airport Link and the transparency issues there.

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As I wrap up, I would like to finish with some of the government's own spin that it happily spruiks on its website. I quote —

METRONET is the single largest investment in public transport that Perth has seen, with a vision of a well-connected Perth with more transport, housing and employment choices.

With approximately 72 kilometres of new passenger rail and 22 ... stations ...

More than a transport program of projects, METRONET also provides long-term legacies for the communities ...

How extraordinary that given the scale and the significance of this project, we have come into this place to raise these very important issues of cost blowouts, significant time delays and transparency around these projects. Those issues were also raised and highlighted by our state's Auditor General. Given the scale and the absolute mammoth cost to taxpayers and the clear failure of this government to deliver after five and a half years of closed-book politics, I urge the government to deliver on its promise to provide the gold standard of transparency that it made over five years ago.

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 pm]: I rise to make a contribution. I will draw attention to the fact that I am not the lead speaker. I am very happy to make a contribution on a motion about taking responsibility for cost blowouts and lengthy delays. That is more or less why I was elected—because of the cost blowouts and lengthy delays of the previous government. The Thornlie–Cockburn Link and so many projects were promised again and again, but never delivered. The airport line was promised and legislated, but not even commenced—never delivered. I asked several times through interjections: will Hon Nick Goiran give anyone in this chamber the authority to release the business case? Can someone just send him a text? When members opposite talk about transparency and cost blowouts and changes and such things, will they ask Hon Nick Goiran: is anyone from the Legislative Assembly, Liberal or National Party, allowed to release the business case? Will they ask Hon Nick Goiran, or Voldemort as we call him, whether it is able to be released?

I would like to take members on a very brief historical journey through *Hansard*, media and election flyers to talk about the different things that have been said in this chamber and in the media about promises, delays and cost blowouts. I would like to start with “Little Frankie” Alban, up in Ellenbrook, the former member for Swan Hills. On 6 May 2010, he said in this chamber —

I didn't commit; I canvassed.

He said he did not promise the Ellenbrook line. I draw members' attention to flyers that landed in every house in Ellenbrook. The flyers said that the Liberals will build the rail line to Ellenbrook. How is that going? How is that delayed time project thing going? It is not going great. I have all the documentation, which I will provide to Hansard after. I quote *Hansard* of 26 May 2011 when he, “Little Frankie”, said “I didn't promise that —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is very disrespectful to a former member of this place.

Several members interjected.

Ms J.J. Shaw: He refers to himself as that!

Mr T.J. HEALY: Can I quote the *Hansard* of him calling himself “Little Frankie”?

Mr R.S. LOVE: I sat next to the former member for Swan Hills for quite some time in this Parliament. I never heard him describe himself in those terms. I think you should ask the member to refer to him with some respect.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Members! Member for Southern River!

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister! Members, I am supposed to hear a point of order in silence and I missed all of that. Can you please say it again?

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member for Southern River is referring to a former member of this place in the most disrespectful tone and he is not here to defend himself, obviously. I ask that you ask him to refer to the former member for Swan Hills, Mr Frank Alban, in a more respectful way.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I withdraw. I am happy to later table a document in which he called himself “Little Frankie”, but I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

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Mr T.J. HEALY: The former member for Swan Hills—the new awesome member for Swan Hills would not say this—said —

Candidates have the ability to promise trains, aeroplanes, aircraft carriers and helicopters—that is what candidates do.

That is where cost blowouts and problems come from.

I would like to refer to the actual bill for the Forrestfield–Airport Link discussed in this chamber in April 2015 when the then Minister for Transport said —

Construction of the Forrestfield line will commence in 2016 ...

How is that for a blowout? The honourable Dean Nalder, the former member for Bateman and former Minister for Transport, also said in *Hansard* of 16 May 2018 that all the Metronet projects belonged to the former government. I quote —

Not one Metronet project was not in the former government’s Perth and Peel transport plan. The only difference was the timing of the project and how we get there.

That is the problem with the former government’s approach to public policy.

I will also quote the wonderful former Premier and member for Cottesloe. Remember, there was all this toing and froing about whether the government was committed to Ellenbrook. On 7 May 2009, the Minister for Transport showed in this chamber that in the 2008–09 midyear review, the project was expected to commence in 2010–11. That was the official government midyear budget document. It was tabled in this chamber and discussed. It was committed to many times but never delivered. Of course, the then Premier started to distance himself. He said that it was a second-term project, not a first-term project. He then told us all about a number of different problems and delays, and he disputed that anyone in his government had even promised it. I quote *Hansard*—that wonderful thing—of 19 March 2015, when former Premier Barnett said, “We abandoned that project.” This government did not and the community of Ellenbrook did not. That is why we have the members for West Swan and Swan Hills.

I have a Facebook live video quote from the 2021 Liberal Party state conference held on 9 October. I think Zak Kirkup was running the live feed or something. Basically, at the 2021 Liberal Party state conference—I do not know whether this was the member for Cottesloe’s comments—it was said that Labor simply cannot manage and cannot deliver major projects.

I will quote Alyssa Hayden, the former member for Darling Range. In a grievance in September 2020, she asked us to slow down the delivery of our projects. In another grievance, Liza Harvey also spoke about the “undeliverability”, I think was her wording, of a railcar manufacturing business, in reference to one of the three that has already been delivered for the Metronet project.

I would like to share a couple of things from the former member for Riverton and former Leader of the Opposition, Mike Nahan. He is another member who continued the tradition of not being allowed by Hon Nick Goiran to deliver or release the business case for the airport line or for any projects. On 14 March 2019, one of his comments in this chamber was about how chaotic and difficult it was to deliver projects in the Liberal Party’s term of government. He was the Treasurer. He said on 14 March 2019, for those who are playing along at home —

I have to say that during our term of government the most controversial aspect of infrastructure planning was integrating rail and road transport. People were popping up with their pet projects all the time. There was no overall plan ...

Thank you, former member for Riverton. We acknowledge the current, very hardworking and far better member for Riverton.

In a matter of public interest debate in this chamber—I do listen to these things because I love rail and road transport—Mike Nahan also made a number of statements criticising us about promising things beyond an election. Of course, that was a hallmark of his government’s time. He basically said that we could not promise something in 2017 and not have it all finished, dusted and moving by 2021, even though the airport line, the Metro Area Express light rail and every other infrastructure project of the former government was never delivered in those time frames. He said in this chamber on 20 February 2017 that promising something to be delivered after the next election is silly.

I would like to briefly draw members’ attention to *The Liberals’ little book of big lies*. I will not go into it too much because I have not sought permission to use it as a tool as a little stunt. The book is a Labor Party document that I used to read to my children. It was a little bit scary for them. No, I did not read this to my children. We try to read evidence-based stuff now. Basically, a document was released by the Labor Party. It is a little biased, I will be honest. The book states that public transport —

... was one big mess in need of a fix.

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So the Liberals threw some “promises” in the mix.
“We’ll send trains to Yanchep and out to the airport,”
“And on top of all that how about a light rail called MAX!”
“We’ll order more trains!”
“And make the buses go further”
After 8 long years, there’s been no progress yet.
Now it’s clearer than ever: we need Labor’s Metronet.
But now it is clear: it was just a tall story. All that Perth ever got was excuses and lies.
And the Liberals’ new transport “plan” sounds like a pig that can fly.

Essentially, that is the secret business case that will not be released.

Ms R. Saffioti: Keep going.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much, minister. I will take that as a compliment.

The media also had a number of things to say, because it is not just about the rail projects; there are a number of road projects. People do not realise how much the previous government spoke about the importance of Roe 8, the toll road it was going to build through our communities. That was promised in 2008 and never delivered. It was promised in 2013 and never delivered. The Liberal Party ran with it again in 2017 and promised it again in 2021. I think the member for Vasse said that we had been planning Metronet for 10 years. That is when it was announced, apparently, even though we were not in government, but that is where we are at. Therefore, the former government has had 20 years to plan for Roe 8, including all the documents and planning, even though the Liberal Party was not in government—actually, it was in government for a majority of that time.

I quote an article of 3 March 2017 in WAtoday written by Emma Young, which states —

Major discrepancies between Roe 8’s environmental report and its business case have raised concerns that the project is a rush job based on massaged figures that could hang WA taxpayers out to dry.

Remember, this is when the former government spent too much. It overestimated the revenue from iron ore; it did not build schools; it raised TAFE fees and then had no money to spend on anything, so the toll road had to pay for the government’s infrastructure projects. The article continues —

Email and documents exchanges between Main Roads WA and the federal Department of Infrastructure, made publicly available ... cast doubt over the design and economic viability of the road.

That was near the end of the term of the last government, and things only got worse after that.

I will briefly speak about the great projects. I am a big fan of the Metronet team. To all those watching at home and all the 10 000-plus people who got a job out of Metronet and will continue to get work, to the Metronet team and the people who now get to go to TAFE and get training qualifications as part of their lifelong qualifications, I am a big fan of the Metronet team.

Even I have to say that I was a little bit sceptical. I was a brand new member of Parliament. I had just come from being a high school teacher. I thought it would be tough when we commenced the Thornlie–Cockburn Link in 2019, but the speed and efficiency, despite such horrible comments about every aspect of the project, has been fantastic to see. The community has come together. I am not dissing our own Department of Education, which I love, or the Department of Training and Workforce Development, but I think Metronet is probably one of the most trusted brands in government. People actually have faith in it. Despite all the horrible things the opposition says, the minister has delivered on what she said. No matter what the opposition threw at them, the people, the community and the Metronet team have done it.

I again mention Denny Avenue. That was a huge win for our community. I am not sure whether members opposite even know where that is. The railcar manufacturing unit is building things here in Western Australia. I think Liza Harvey said that it was not feasible and was a fantasy. In an MPI on September 2017, she said that there was no provision in the budget for this fantasy of railcar manufacturing. Why can our young people not get a job building things here in Western Australia? Why can we not build things here? Why does the Liberal Party hate our metropolitan and regional communities so much that it would say no to them having opportunities such as that? Again, I refer to the great projects, including railcar manufacturing and the multistorey car park in Mandurah. The airport line opening will be the fourth Metronet project that has been delivered.

Member for Cottesloe, as part of us delivering on our promises, trains will be more frequent at Claremont station. That station is actually in the member’s electorate; I can get him a map. People in his community will benefit. Train frequency will almost double to every six minutes during peak times and every seven minutes during off-peak times. This will change people’s lives. They will be able to spend more time with their families and not stuck in congestion. That is what the beautiful vision of Metronet and connecting our communities is all about.

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I will conclude on a couple of points. I quote the minister again from 2015 when, in this chamber, she referred to my predecessor, the member for Southern River, Peter Abetz, and said —

The member for Southern River has to realise that the Liberal Party does not build rail lines until it is dragged kicking and screaming to them by the Labor Party. The Liberal Party does not build rail lines until the Labor Party initiates them or drags members opposite kicking and screaming to them.

Members of the Nationals WA and Liberal Party in the “new fake Christian Nick Goiran coalition” need to realise that the community does not hold faith in the things that they have said. The community knows that when they promise things, they will not deliver.

I would like to finish with a comment by Peter Abetz that was reported in my local paper *Comment News* in 2011 —

Southern River MLA Peter Abetz also called for a rail extension, yet he feared that the only hope in extending the Thornlie line would lie with a future Labor government.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.41 pm]: I certainly appreciate the opportunity today to wrap up a few things here and respond to the member for Moore’s excellent motion —

That this house calls on the McGowan Labor government to take responsibility for the cost blowouts and lengthy delays besieging the Metronet projects.

Unlike the member for Southern River, who dealt in history, I am going to deal with reality and what is actually happening now. We have seen a massive cost blowout in a project that was promised. In 2016–17, we heard the promises. I am glad the Minister for Transport is back. We have gone through various subjects. The member for Cottesloe mentioned the promise in 2016–17 of the then shadow Minister for Transport and the shadow Treasurer, Ben Wyatt, that there would be a thorough costing and robust modelling. What has actually happened is a delay in delivery and a project that has run over budget. That is the reality. Later, I will go through a few of the projects that some of those members on this side have mentioned.

I first want to start with what I thought was a rather disturbing Father’s Day post that barracked for Mark McGowan. On Father’s Day, the department responsible for Metronet thanked Mark McGowan “for being the best Dad there is”. I do not think that that is the role of the communications team at Metronet, and it did spark a fierce backlash, as Peter Law said in his article of 5 September.

Several government members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr T. Healy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River! You have had your opportunity.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will not be taking interjections, thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Brian C. commented on this story and stated —

Over promise, under deliver and then blame everyone else ... that’s this government’s play book.

That is spot on. I am not sure who Brian C. is, but I agree with his comments. Unfortunately, that is the sort of stuff that is going on with this department.

Several government members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Another excellent article by Peter Law is headed “Why Metronet could be a thorn in the state government’s side at the next election”. I will quote a few of Peter Law’s comments —

Mark McGowan first spruiked Metronet in 2013 and the promise of an expanded railway helped propel Labor into power four years later, but its delivery now threatens to be a thorn in his side at the 2025 State election.

This week we learnt the Forrestfield Airport Link—announced by the Barnett government in 2013 but rebadged as a Metronet project by Labor—would open on October 9.

Sinkholes, flooded tunnels, safety incidents and disruption to the global supply chain caused by COVID all conspired to push back the completion date for the highly complex build by two years.

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He went on to talk about the other day when he was standing on the platform at the Minister for Transport's press conference —

Unfortunately for the reporters standing on the platform at her press conference, a train went past at the exact moment she was explaining the Thornlie–Cockburn Link and Byford rail extension had been delayed yet again.

I was closest to the microphones and all I could make out over the screech were the words “five” and “ford”.

What Saffioti actually revealed was that these two projects had been delayed until the middle of 2025—months after West Australians vote at the next State election.

Peter Law detailed this in his article and then later talked about the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, which would have opened in 2021 with trains running on the Armadale line to Byford in 2023. He states —

This week we were given a new reason for another setback.

A press release explained the 18-month shutdown of the entire Armadale line from “early 2023”—required to elevate sections of track to facilitate the removal of eight congestion-causing level crossings—would start in “late 2023”.

As outlined by many of our speakers today, we have delays and we have cost blowouts. Peter Law is concerned that this could have an effect on the 2025 state election. No doubt, the people will be fatigued.

Mr D.R. Michael interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Balcatta!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will not be taking interjections, thanks.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, I will just remind you that the member for Roe is not taking interjections.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Mr D.R. Michael interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Balcatta!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Before I go on, I would like to refer to another article by ABC news of 14 August 2022 headed “Losing Track”. The main points outlined include WA Labor's —

... plan to connect more than 2 million people by rail since before coming into power in 2017, but so far not a single train has left the station.

It says how in 2017 we were promised up to 22 new train stations, 72 kilometres of rail and a fleet of new purpose-built trains, but so far we have only got a car park, two removed level crossings and a building full of trains. The program has grown in size from nine projects to 18 with a cost blowout from \$3.6 billion to almost \$10 billion, and there is still little more to show than sandy construction sites and unopened facilities. According to Infrastructure Australia, congestion in Perth costs an estimated \$1.5 billion a year. The article refers to Peter Newman from Curtin University and states —

WA's focus on roads led to a haphazard implementation of Metronet, and he attributed the problem to the separation of state transport agencies.

I would be interested to hear the minister's comment on that in her response. We need more of our state agencies to work together.

Ms R. Saffioti: Does the National Party want to abolish Main Roads?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am not talking about abolishing Main Roads, minister. I am talking about Main Roads working together with the Public Transport Authority in a more constructive manner. I certainly think that would be useful. I reiterate that I will not be taking interjections, thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Mr J.N. Carey: You can't handle it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins): Minister, I am going to call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Housing! Minister, I have called you for the first time. I ask you to cease your interjections for the remainder of the member for Roe's speech.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have some points that I would like to make without those sorts of interjections.

Mr T.J. Healy interjected.

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The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River, I call you to order for the first time as well—or is that your third time? Sorry.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If I can go back to the state budget, when we talk about the narrative and some of the themes with Metronet, which is obviously the largest element of spending, the spending comes from different areas of the budget. They are Transport; Commissioner of Main Roads; Public Transport Authority; Planning, Lands and Heritage; and WA Planning Commission. The total expenditure for Metronet that we been able to calculate comes to \$10.6 billion. That project originally started at around \$3 billion or \$3.5 billion. It now appears to have blown out to \$10.6 billion. Budget paper No 3 states under “Key Initiatives in the 2022–23 Budget” that Metronet is responsible for a \$1 billion investment to expand the program of works. That budget paper states also that an amount of \$60 million has been committed to replacement services for the Armadale rail shutdown. My concern about the Armadale line is that people will get out of the habit of catching the train. If the track record of the delivery of Metronet is anything to go by, the people of Armadale could be waiting for up to three years for the recommencement of their train service. That is a serious concern and something that this government may pay a price for. I am certainly a supporter of rail. I am a supporter of many of the projects that are part of the Metronet portfolio, if you like. However, I am concerned about the government’s ability to deliver that project on time.

I will go through some of the highlights. The Thornlie–Cockburn line has doubled in price. It is more than \$400 million over budget. The Morley–Ellenbrook line has had a \$260 million blowout. The cost of the Byford extension has gone from \$292 million to \$797 million. That is \$506 million over budget. The completion date has gone from 2021 to 2023.

I look forward to the opening of the Forrestfield–Airport Link. However, as the member for Cottesloe pointed out, the times when the trains will be running will not tie in with the requirements of fly-in fly-out workers. What will be done about that? That will be the peak time for people to use that train. I am curious to know whether the Minister for Transport has an answer to that. One would think that would be the main purpose of that line, because that is where all the activity occurs at five o’clock in the morning at the airport terminals. As the member for Vasse pointed out, the minister has released 470 media releases over five and a half years. The cost of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road has blown out to \$1.4 billion. That is what I last heard about the cost. I recall that that started at about \$500 million or \$600 million. In talking about bypasses, I need to mention the Walkaway bypass. I still get letters from people in that part of the member for Moore’s electorate about the consultation, or lack thereof, and the worry about that bypass. There is also, of course, the issue that was mentioned today of the cost to taxpayers of the Huawei episode, which has been very disappointing.

I want to mention a couple of things in the next five minutes before I wrap up my contribution. A couple of Saturdays ago, I attended the Livestock and Rural Transport Association of WA conference. Some real issues were raised about regional Western Australia. I know this is slightly aside from Metronet, but there are real issues about the funding for Tanami Road. To me, this is about money that seems to have been channelled away from some of our regional road projects and towards Metronet. Some of the people who drive along Tanami Road spoke to me on that day and said that it is taking them up to 24 hours to travel 200 kilometres on that road. We need to address that urgently. Another real concern is Great Northern Highway. The drop-offs on the shoulders of that road are incredibly dangerous. I heard the story of a young woman who was in an SUV and had to take to the side of the road as a wide vehicle approached, and although she had good clearance, she lost her petrol tank as a consequence of having to do that.

Another issue is that stop signs need to be removed at rail crossings that are no longer in use. That situation is becoming very dangerous, because people are now ignoring stop signs on rail crossings everywhere, even if those railway lines are still in use. Community anger is still growing at the lack of response to the call for better railway crossings in regional WA. I have heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about Lara and Annemaree Jensen and others—if I have heard it once, I have heard it five times—and calling for changes to be made. They have been waiting for over 20 years for the recommendations to be acted upon following the death of their brother. We need action on those rail crossings. To me, that should be the real emphasis. When I see that the cost of Metronet has blown out from \$3 billion to \$10.6 billion, and that families in the regions are still pleading for some action on those railway crossings, I would love to see the Minister for Transport take that action.

Another issue is the deteriorating condition of new roads that are being built. I brought this up with the minister during the estimates debate. One issue that was raised with me yesterday is Wagin–Dumbleyung Road. That road has just been rebuilt and resurfaced. It looked fantastic for a few weeks. However, sure enough, last week there was a truck rollover, so I now have the local community jumping up and down about that. This is a new job. What is going on? Why is that road falling apart? I also brought up with the minister in estimates what I would call warranty work on Albany Highway just north of Bannister. The issue is that these jobs are being done in winter and they are not being followed up properly. How does the warranty situation work with Albany Highway, and also with Wagin–Dumbleyung Road, which has now caused a truck rollover? From my perspective, when I see the blowout

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in the cost of the Metronet project, I think about all our regional road projects that do not see the light of day. That will wrap it up. Thank you.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [7.00 pm]: I rise to respond to some of the claims made by the opposition in the debate on this motion about Metronet. It has always been clear to me that the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA do not support public and rail transport in this state. Let us look at their record in government. They did not build one new line in eight and a half years. They extended a rail line north to Butler but that was it in eight and a half years. They bought a few new carriages but did nothing to support local industry.

The Liberal government made a series of promises. In 2008, it made a commitment to build the Ellenbrook rail line. It distributed a flyer to every household in the then seat of Swan Hills. The flyer said that the “Liberals will build a rail line to Ellenbrook”. I just want to educate people on exactly what transpired with this flyer. I was newly in opposition, finding my way as the member for West Swan. I was working within the party and told members that the Liberal Party had committed to a rail line to Ellenbrook. It won government and, as the member for Southern River alluded to, it committed \$10 million in the midyear review to show planning for the rail line to Ellenbrook. I went out there saying that the government had committed to a rail line to Ellenbrook and the then Premier, Colin Barnett, said, “No, we didn’t.” I said, “No, you did.” It was one of those typical debates. Premier Colin Barnett—who, basically I think, did not tell the truth very easily—said that there was no commitment to the rail line to Ellenbrook. I want to make note of the late Frank Calabrese in this debate. We knew that a flyer was distributed. The late Frank Calabrese—we attended his funeral just a few weeks ago—sent us the flyer that was delivered to his household, which said that the Liberals would build a rail line to Ellenbrook. I will be forever thankful to Frank because it was this flyer that I was then able to talk about with people within my party who did not believe that this flyer existed, and also to the wider media to show people that there was in fact a very significant commitment to build the rail line to Ellenbrook. The Liberal government not only failed to build the rail line, but also refused to admit that it actually committed to it.

That was in 2008. The Liberal government then did a semi-review and said that the project could not be done. The then Premier said it was a second-term commitment. The 2013 election came and went and there was still no rail line to Ellenbrook. When we went to the 2017 election, the Liberal Party had not done even one bit of planning to deliver that rail line to Ellenbrook. It was not as though there was no funding and the previous government had done all the planning and it was just trying to secure the finances, it did not even bother to start doing the work. After eight and a half years, and a commitment given in 2008, the former government did not deliver it and it did not even do the work.

The next one was the Metro Area Express light rail. With much fanfare, members of the former government announced it. As I recall, it was at the park at the Terry Tyzack Aquatic Centre. They said, “Buy property along the route. We will be delivering light rail.” It was a major commitment at the 2013 election. Remember, they had been in government for four years. Bless our hearts, all of us in opposition; we do our best to make sure that all our commitments are strong, but they had been in government for four years. This was a government-endorsed commitment. They went out and promised MAX light rail. They were re-elected and they said, “It’s too hard”, even though it was a commitment driven by the then government. They were not even in opposition.

Next I want to talk about the Forrestfield–Airport Link. We launched Metronet. Hon Ken Travers and the then opposition leader, Mark McGowan, launched Metronet version 1, including a rail line to the airport. The then government matched the commitment, and after the election, it changed the route. That government changed it into a tunnel, but it matched the commitment. In 2012—again, having been in government for four years—it said that it would be finished by 2018. Do you know what? There was no embarrassment and no remembering of these key facts. When we won government in 2017, the tunnel boring machines were not even here. I remember going out in May and June, when they started arriving. I remember looking at them and saying, “This is a big project! These TBMs look pretty sophisticated!” We went on and we built that rail line. Opposition members have had it both ways. On one day, they claim it as their own; on the other days, they say, “That is not safe. That is not a good project.” Again, the opposition has it both ways.

I heard the comments made by the member for Roe today. I think he knows they were completely false and incorrect. He said that people are worried about our ability to deliver regional projects because of Metronet. That is completely false.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is not the correct parliamentary term that the minister should be using in relation to the member, in claiming that he was making completely false statements.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The comments that the minister made were perfectly acceptable because there was no —

Ms R. Saffioti: I wasn't calling him a liar.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is right. There was no claim that he was deliberately making misleading comments. Carry on, minister.

Debate Resumed

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: If we cannot say that the comments made by the opposition are false, it is going to be a very boring parliamentary term!

We are delivering record investment in regional WA. Projects like the Tanami Road are only on anyone's agenda because, together with the federal government, we have put money towards them. That project is only on the agenda because we are actually doing it. Again, I hate to say this, but in eight and a half years those opposite did not do much on roads, so there is a lot of catch-up. There is the issue of maintenance and the quality of some of the roads.

Members opposite sold the Westrail freight lines. We are working with CBH and Arc Infrastructure to invest in things like improved sidings and the ability to move larger trains to port more quickly. We are working really constructively with industry to try to bring back some of the efficiencies that rail had in the system—efficiencies that those opposite ripped away when they sold it. Not only did members of the opposition sell it, they then closed down the lines. They sold it, and then they went through and closed the tier 3 wheat lines.

A second point relates to the maintenance issue. The former government also took wholesale contracting out of Main Roads Western Australia. What we have done is reverse that, and we are bringing in wholesale contracting now. We are insourcing the management and much of the delivery of our regional road program. I have heard the concerns about the variability in some of the quality.

I also believe that regional people should get long-term jobs in the roads department. It should have people who are trained locally, with local regional graduates undertaking engineering degrees, staying in the regions and helping to deliver roads. That is what I believe in and that is what we are doing. Last year we began a new local graduate program to train regional people to be able to take leadership jobs and scholarships in Main Roads. That means we are not just asking Perth people to do two or three years in the regions; we are asking regional people to put their names forward and we are giving them the opportunity to have long-term jobs in regional WA. Again, that is a very good project.

We are investing more than ever in the safety of rail crossings. We are spending more than ever on road safety. I think when members opposite left government, they were spending maybe \$10 million to \$20 million on that road safety program. We have spent about \$450 million over the past two or three years. We are addressing some of the concerns on the Great Northern Highway all the way through to issues like the Tanami. We are onto it and we are delivering on it.

This metro-regional divide is something that the opposition should not continue to pursue. I say this in all seriousness, because it cannot pitch to densely populated areas throughout the metropolitan area that the Nationals will look after them, when all its members do is say, "These people don't deserve infrastructure." The National Party does not believe people in the suburbs deserve infrastructure. I remember when members opposite were ministers. I did not see any relevant minister in my electorate forever. I remember being out there as the member for West Swan and I did not see any of the ministers with relevant portfolios ever come to the suburbs to understand what was happening on the ground. The demands of the suburbs are real. Areas like Darling Range and Byford that were, in a sense, rural communities are now becoming significant urban centres. There is the challenge of rural roads becoming major connecting roads, and new roads like the Tonkin Highway extension. There are new projects like the Byford rail extension and there is a need for community services, schools and education.

Member for Swan Hills, we have seen that the demands in the Ellenbrook corridor are enormous. We are there trying to meet those demands, plus continue our excellent delivery in the regions. I do not subscribe to the idea of the Perth metropolitan area suburbs versus the regions. To be honest, most people in regional WA like the fact that we are investing in infrastructure around the state. They have family in Perth and they visit their family in Perth. The idea that all regional people begrudge expenditure in the suburbs, I think, is wrong. Everyone supports investment across the state.

Now I will go to some of the claims about cost. I do not know where the shadow minister is, but the issues about cost are deliberately misleading. Members opposite are not telling the truth about the cost. They are looking at our commitments for a group of projects in 2017. Remember, when we gave the cost allocation of \$2.9 billion, we did not include the Forrestfield–Airport Link because that was already funded. Therefore, the additional cost was \$2.9 billion. Let us start with that simple concept: the additional cost was \$2.9 billion. It did not include the

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Forrestfield–Airport Link, because that was already funded in some way in the budget. First of all, we have to include that back in the base. I do not think members opposite understand, but there are a lot of new Metronet projects. For example, we committed to four level crossing removals. I think we are now doing 15, because the commonwealth government has given us more money, and because we are in a situation to deliver more infrastructure along these networks. For example, we committed to four level crossings at Oats Street, Wharf Street, Denny Avenue and Caledonian Avenue. We have now done Denny Avenue. I am trying to remember these off the top of my head. We have Mint Street, Oats Street, Welshpool Road, Hamilton Street, Wharf Street and William Street. That is in Beckenham. There are six there. If we head down to Armadale way, we are removing a lot of level crossings there, like those at Thomas Road and Armadale, and there are another two around the Armadale station.

Mr H.T. Jones: There's Larsen Road.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There is Larsen. We are delivering a lot more. For example, we are now including in the Metronet cost the full upgrade of signalling across the network. We expanded our train carriage purchases. You keep peddling a completely false argument, but no-one believes you. It is completely false. The fact that you do not comprehend that shows how stupid you are.

Mr R.S. Love: Come on, lift your game.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Lift my game?

Mr R.S. Love: If that's the best you can do—personal abuse.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Like I said, it has always been the case in this place. The conservatives come in here and say whatever they like about us. We hold a mirror to what they do and how they behave, and they cannot handle it.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader!

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I call you for the first time.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We hold a mirror to their behaviour and they cannot handle it. It is like us saying that we committed to five schools that will cost \$50 million, but now we are going to deliver 10 schools that will cost \$100 million, and they say that there is a massive blowout. We are delivering more schools, but there is a blowout. That is their concept. Compare like with like! Fair enough—do that. I acknowledge that there have been some cost increases in some of the projects. I acknowledge that, but do not come in here and use that ridiculous claim that no-one believes. The idea that something cost \$2.9 billion and is now costing \$10 billion is completely false. We have said it a hundred times. Firstly, as I said, the Forrestfield–Airport Link is included in the latter and not in the \$2.9 billion. Also there are another eight level crossing removals, I think. There are new projects like Lakelands station; there is high-capacity signalling across the network; there are more railcars; there are things like the new Greenwood station multistorey carpark; there is the Morrison Road level crossing removal; and there are a number of new projects across the whole area. There you go! We dispute that figure.

Members opposite again try to talk about lack of transparency. I will say it: they are lazy. We had a question in the upper house today from Hon Tjorn Sibma, who said, “Can you give us the timetable for the new Forrestfield–Airport Link?” My staff downloaded the timetable from the website, photocopied it and tabled it in the upper house. I mean —

Mr W.J. Johnston: When I get asked those questions, I refer them to the URL, if it's on the web.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We do not do that, because we got told off by some of our upper house colleagues. We download it for them, we photocopy it and we give it to them. To ask us for a timetable —

Mr D.T. Punch: Did they read it?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not know. I do not know what they did with it.

Ms J.J. Shaw: At least they have graduated from asking how many pens are in the drawers of the ministers' offices!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You are right, but I think it is a slippery road back to those types of questions! To be honest, if I were in opposition, I would have been too embarrassed to put the question. I would be sitting in a corner hiding

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after asking that question thinking, “How lazy am I? I should have just checked the website.” That is the level. Members opposite talk about transparency. Look at the budget papers. All the information is there.

As I said, we have addressed the issue of cost. We have addressed the issue of transparency.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It’s as if they don’t read the budget papers.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is as though members opposite do not do that. Then the opposition referred to funding. Members would be happy to know that the only borrowings against one of our Metronet projects is for the Forrestfield–Airport Link, because that was the one that was funded by the former government. The only borrowings against a Metronet line is for the one funded on the former government’s watch, the FAL.

Mr D.R. Michael: Was that in the business case?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We still have not seen it. The fact is we secured nearly \$4 billion from the commonwealth for Metronet. We have debt coming down and record surpluses. Members opposite claim that Metronet is a financial disaster, but nothing backs that up. The member for Moore has a “Metrodebt” sticker on his vehicle. The only debt we incurred for any Metronet project was for the one that the Nationals funded in its cabinet through borrowings. That is because we have managed the finances well, run strong operating surpluses and been able to use both commonwealth funding and other funds to support our projects. That is a good thing. We will continue to manage the finances well to ensure that we deliver a very, very affordable project in the context of the state infrastructure program.

Like I said, we are spending billions of dollars on roads. Members opposite seem to want to criticise road spending, but we are spending billions of dollars on roads. We are spending a lot on Bunbury Outer Ring Road. It is costing a lot; we are spending a billion dollars on the Bunbury Outer Ring Road. We are doing the Albany ring-road and works on Great Northern Highway. We have \$500 million for Tanami Road. We have the Outback Way project. We have major projects all around the state, but members opposite seem to be worried only about Metronet because they do not support it. Do members know what? If they want to say they are not doing some projects, stand up and say it. Stand up and say, “We are not going to deliver these projects.”

Mr D.A.E. Scaife: Tell the densely populated areas.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Which densely populated area would miss out under a Liberal–National government?

I also want to talk about some of the claims made against the Metronet communications team in relation to that post. That was a misjudgement. But let us talk about what the Nationals WA did when it was in government. The former government had RFR stickers on government buses. Transwa buses all ended up with royalties for regions stickers in National Party green. The former government wrapped a bus —

Mr W.J. Johnston: The hidden bus.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: When the former government announced the Ellenbrook bus rapid transit project, it went out—again, before it was anywhere near delivering it—and wrapped a bus in Bigger Picture blue to promote the Ellenbrook BRT. It had it ready to run up and down to Ellenbrook until we exposed it and I found it sitting in the Shenton Park bus depot. One of my favourite press conferences of all time was standing outside the fence of the Shenton Park bus depot with the Bigger Picture bus right behind me, and saying what a politicisation of the public service it was.

Let us go to MAX light rail.

Mr W.J. Johnston: The TV ads.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member is right. The former government had TV ads of projects it was not even delivering.

Mr W.J. Johnston: They had TV ads of MAX coming down into the city.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It produced little USBs in the shape of MAX. The former government produced —

Mr D.A.E. Scaife: They were life-size cut-outs. They did deliver MAX light rail, but it was made of cardboard!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I forgot about the cardboard cut-out that was put in the mall. I do not know why he did it because it showed that it was a ridiculous idea to try to fit it through the mall. I know that opposition members do not like history because they do not want to reflect on their own performance, but I have been around for a few years, and I am starting to show it! Opposition members stand up and throw around these stupid allegations, but I know what transpired in the past and I also know what is happening out there. The member for Roe quoted Brian C. Over the dinner break, I had a quick look at the Facebook site to see whether we had any positive comments. I found Brian C. I wondered whether all those comments went one way. Do they all hate us and think that the Liberal Party is really good? Funnily enough, that is not the case. One comment was, “I love your Metronet project. Perth arises and shines.” Another one—this is one of my favourites—says, “Great, keep up the good work, Rita! So far in front of the Libs

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achievements you can't hear the band playing." Brian C. might have commented, but a lot of people are making comments. The point is that I would not base any parliamentary debate on feedback from Facebook, but the member for Roe did.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Except for the good ones.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We can all find the comments that justify what we are doing, but the biggest feedback I get is basically everywhere I go. My mother has been in hospital and I have been visiting the hospital nearly every day. The people there are starting to recognise me. The nurse who lives in Redcliffe is so excited that we are building an affordable and accessible railway line. Some people tell me that I should not worry about the criticism, which I do not, and some are saying to me, "Keep going. This is great!" There is a pride in WA from delivering these projects and there is an excitement in WA about building this project. Do members know what? People will also attack us because this is WA! Like I said, I was asked to comment on the latest tourism ads. I said that for as long as I have been in politics, whenever we release tourism ads, 50 per cent of people hate them and 50 per cent love them—ever since the Elle Macpherson campaign.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: They're never going to beat that!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. Some people want to criticise us, but that is politics. When we remove all the noise and go to Ellenbrook and meet those kids, they know that when they finish high school, they will have the opportunity to travel for less than \$5, because they will be on a concession fare. Of course, with the auto-loading SmartRider, it will be a bigger discount. Let us assume that the maximum cash fare is \$5. They can then connect to jobs and opportunities. They can go to universities and TAFEs. That is a really good thing. Frankly, without us, the people of Byford would not have a rail line built to Byford. It is as simple as that. I do not care about the posturing and stupidity that was being played out there. I know that without us there would be no train to Byford. Members opposite want to talk about density. Go to some of these suburbs where the average block size is 350 square metres and people need access to good parks and opportunities. Go there and tell me those people do not deserve a railway line. Go there and tell me that. Young people will get opportunities. They cannot all afford three or four cars for their families. They need this public transport to access workplaces. Nurses and other people in essential services need it to move around the city at an affordable rate. Opposition members stand there and criticise and criticise. They have no idea about the pressures of people living in the suburbs and no idea about the people who rely on public transport to get ahead in life. They have no idea. Without these routes and these connections, people will miss out on opportunities. Like I said, I am proud that we are delivering.

We are on the path of delivering on every commitment we made. The Ellenbrook rail line is an example. I know that without this government there would be no rail line to Ellenbrook. It is as simple as that. There are a lot of things that happen because of the bureaucratic process, but when I think about my term as minister and what we have done in government, we have made deliberate policy decisions that have made a difference. I know that without us, there would be no rail line to Ellenbrook. I know that without the McGowan government, the Denny Avenue level crossing would still be there. That area would continue to be neglected because those people opposite do not care, never go there and do not understand. I know that without us, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link would not be underway.

Mr P. Papalia: There wouldn't be affordable flights in the regions.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will keep going. I am on point two.

Without us, the Yanchep extension would not be underway. Everyone on that side did not believe the Yanchep extension was necessary. Without us, there would be no Byford extension. We are not only building the Byford extension, but also lifting the Armadale train station and removing the level crossing around that area. It has cost more and was not in the 2017 commitment, but I know that the member for Armadale—who should be listening to this because this is very important—knows that the reconfiguration of the Armadale train station will completely change that town centre and create new places for people to live in a safe and happy environment. I know that.

I know that if it was not for us, there would not be a Bellevue railcar manufacturing facility. The opposition said that we were bringing back an industry from a bygone era, that it could not be done and that it was too expensive. Trains are now being made in WA. If it was not for us, that would not be there. I know that if it was not for us, we would not be investing in our rail lines in the regions. It was beyond ministers of the previous government to convince anyone to invest in regional rail. They gave up.

If it was not for us, there would not be a two-zone fare cap, saving people across the suburbs—people in Dawesville and Mandurah—thousands of dollars. If it was not for us, we would not be rebuilding the *Australind* train sets. If it was not for us, there would not be a two-zone fare cap in the regions and affordable fares. I will be making more announcements about the success of that program very, very soon.

The opposition can do what it wants and can believe in its own discourse or filibuster, or whatever the word is. It can do that and it will continue to do that, but if opposition members think that that is going to be successful for

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them, they can keep going. I go out and meet workers on site. They come up to me and I cannot believe how excited they are to be working on Metronet. There are people working on our projects, particularly on some of our latest projects, who will not do FIFO now because they get to live in the city and deliver brilliant projects.

I have walked around the new airport station and the new High Wycombe and Redcliffe stations. They are magnificent. Imagine the pride of Western Australians when they see those stations, particularly the airport station. When people arrive from interstate and overseas and see those stations, they will not believe what they are seeing.

Mr D.T. Punch: Don't forget the Bayswater rail bridge.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I forgot about that. If it were not for us, trucks would continue to crash into the Bayswater bridge.

As I said, the opposition can come in and run its motions. I have always said that the last two and a half years in particular, with COVID, have brought new challenges of labour shortages, supply pressures and cost pressures. Opposition members can say that there have been cost increases, but everyone at home who is trying to build a pergola, get a retaining wall built or do anything will think, "It's costing me more." There are people out there who cannot get basic jobs done. People are experiencing that. This has been a tough time to build. That will change over the next 12 to 18 months, but in the past year it has been tough.

As I said, National Party members can keep doing what they are doing and paint themselves as the anti-public transport and anti-infrastructure group, and people will not trust them to deliver anything. That is their choice. I am happy to debate this any day of the week and any time of the day. I have enormous pride in what we are undertaking in probably the most challenging time for delivering infrastructure. I have enormous pride in the work that is being undertaken. I cannot believe that people are criticising this. The feedback that I get all the time is that people want to learn more about what we are doing. They love the fact that when they drive along Tonkin Highway, they can see all the works that are being done. The Tonkin Highway widening is another project that would not have been delivered were it not for us.

Opposition members can deliberately mislead and deliberately not tell the truth. They have now put out that the cost has increased from nearly \$3 billion to \$10 billion. Now that they have put that out there, I know where they can go next! It is not true. It is not right, as I have attempted to tell them a number of times. If I were in opposition, I would probably try to get it correct, because every time members opposite put that figure out there, people discount what they say.

We will continue to deliver this transformational project. We are planning to get more housing opportunities near our new stations. What is important for me is the fact that young people will be able to get great access to public transport. It will be very affordable. There will be routes connecting people across the suburbs. People will get chances when they might not have had chances. To me, if we can give one kid a chance to go to university or TAFE and to get a job when they might not have had that opportunity, that is worth it. Whether it is five kids or 20 kids, those opportunities are very hard to get. Once they miss those opportunities, it is hard to get them back.

I am very proud that the suburbs of Byford, Alkimos, Eglinton and Yanchep are continuing to grow. We are delivering in Ellenbrook as fast as we can. Ellenbrook is nearly finished, but there will be further opportunities around the train station. Areas to the north of Ellenbrook will have great access to the new train station. It will mean that people in the suburbs of Brabham and Dayton and the new suburbs along the Ellenbrook corridor in Henley Brook will be able to get to jobs and have opportunities. It will create a better life for all of them.

I am very, very proud. If National Party members want to keep debating these issues, we are happy to debate them every time. It shows their hatred for public transport. They bring in the regions versus metro divide. That again emphasises that they might want to appeal to metro WA at the next election. We will be telling everybody in Yanchep that National Party members believe that they do not deserve that rail line. We will be telling everyone in Ellenbrook that National Party members never, ever wanted them to have this rail line. We will be telling everybody that National Party members want to rip everything out of the suburbs, because they do not believe that people in the suburbs deserve anything. We will be saying to everyone in densely populated areas, "National Party members have argued day in and day out against you. They do not believe in what you are getting, they do not want you to get anything, and they will rip it all away." That is what the National Party will do across the suburbs of the metropolitan area.

MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary) [7.38 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to the debate on this frankly ridiculous motion that has been put forward by the member for Moore, which states —

That this house calls on the McGowan Labor government to take responsibility for the cost blowouts and lengthy delays besieging the Metronet projects.

Before I address some of the more ludicrous comments made by opposition members, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Minister Saffioti. I have the great privilege of being her next-door neighbour. She and I share Ellenbrook—I have the north part of Ellenbrook and Minister Saffioti has the south part. Not only as a local member, but also as a member of Parliament in this place, I think members should look to the minister as one of

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the most prolific and effective transport ministers there has ever been. I really enjoyed listening to the minister's account of the projects she has delivered. She took us through the financing of those projects in a very methodical way. Perhaps if members opposite took a little more time to understand how infrastructure projects in particular are financed, they might not have found themselves in the terrible quagmire they were in when they left government back in 2017. I think the minister is a legend. She will only become more legendary as time wears on.

I have thought about the problem with the Liberals and Nationals, and I think it is envy—I genuinely do. At the end of the day, this government is not delivering hollow or empty promises. It does not say that it will build this or that and then never deliver a single thing. The Liberals and Nationals look upon this government's achievements with deep-seated, green-eyed envy—as green as the National Party shirts or perhaps the jacket that I am wearing this evening. They have no credibility when it comes to delivering projects and they cannot stand the idea of delivering necessary infrastructure in outer metropolitan seats such as mine. In fact, if we think about the member for Moore, his opposition to and white-anting of projects like the Ellenbrook train line is actually quite bizarre, because it is his constituents in Bindoon and Chittering—the kids he represents up there—who will come down and use the Morley–Ellenbrook railway line to get to university or access places of employment. He is white-anting his own constituents by running this bizarre narrative around Metronet. At the end of the day, members opposite continue to undermine it because, fundamentally, they just do not believe in public transport, and they certainly do not believe that projects like the Morley–Ellenbrook line should be delivered. They have zero credibility. Let us have a look at the record of their parties. This coalition or alliance—whatever it is called—closed the Fremantle line, decimated regional rail services and closed the Midland workshops. I tell members what: a lot of my kids love the fact that the Bellevue railway workshops are now open. It is giving kids in my community jobs. It is giving them pathways, through the Midland TAFE, into employment opportunities. It is great to see these locally manufactured railway cars. The Liberal and National Parties sold the Westrail freight business, as the minister just pointed out; failed to deliver the Ellenbrook railway line—I will have a bit to say about that—failed to deliver MAX light rail, as we all know; closed the tier 3 rail network; and tried to kill off *AvonLink*.

A government member: They did; they defunded it. Sorry, I forgot that. The first issue was that they defunded it.

Ms J.J. SHAW: Yes, it was absolutely shameful. They are a joke! Nobody takes them seriously, least of all people in densely populated areas.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms J.J. SHAW: I am not taking interjections, member for Moore. I sat quietly all the way through the member for Moore's speech—in fact, I struggled to stay awake—so I am certainly not going to take interjections from him now. He should have heard what I said just a moment ago about his constituents in Chittering and Bindoon, when he was wandering around outside. We all know that Metronet is not one project; it is a number of projects. In fact, we have gone above and beyond in our delivery of Metronet. We took 10 projects to the election—the Forrestfield–Airport Link, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, the Yanchep rail extension, the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the Byford rail extension, new and upgraded train stations, improved signalling, four level crossings and 78 railcars. There are now 18 Metronet projects. What an achievement, minister; I congratulate her.

Members opposite are flip-flopping. I think there are some really interesting distinctions and contradictions between where the Nationals sit on projects, where the Liberals sit, where “The Clan” part of the Liberals sit, and where the non-Clan part sits—maybe the “Black Hand Gang” is still in there, but who knows. They do not know their left hand from their right. They do not know whether they are Arthur or Martha, particularly when it comes to transport.

Let us talk about the Morley–Ellenbrook line, one of my favourite projects.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Ms J.J. SHAW: Honestly, member for Girrawheen! Members have to sit next to this woman; they cannot hear what she just said!

Anyway, let us get back to the matter at hand—the Morley–Ellenbrook line. We all know the Liberal Party's dreadful form on Morley–Ellenbrook. In 2008, the Liberal Party said it would deliver the project. It delivered absolutely nothing. It then promised Metro Area Express light rail. It was fully costed and fully funded, if members remember. The Liberal Party promised it but did not deliver a thing. It spent 25 million bucks!

Ms C.M. Rowe: Where is MAX?

Ms J.J. SHAW: MAX is nowhere to be seen, a bit like former opposition members.

The Liberal Party abandoned it, sacked it and could not deliver it. In 2013, the Liberal Party went back to heavy rail and promised an Ellenbrook line again, but did not deliver. It did not do a skerrick of work. When the minister entered the ministry and started rummaging around in the cupboards looking for all the plans for the Ellenbrook rail line that the Liberal Party had promised, not a single piece of work had been done.

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In 2017, we then had “Little Frankie” getting up there and promising his bus lane. He was begging Dean Nalder for a bus lane. I actually felt sorry for him. I will quote from an article by Daniel Emerson in *The West Australian* of 25 February 2016, which states —

... Frank Alban wants abandoned Ellenbrook bus rapid transit system back on the agenda.

“Little Frankie” was in there fighting for a bus—rapid or otherwise.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, a previous speaker used that term to refer to a previous member of Parliament, which he subsequently withdrew. I just ask you to show a little bit of respect. Yes, I understand he may have referred to himself as that —

Ms J.J. SHAW: He has!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: But!

Ms J.J. SHAW: For *Hansard*, on Wednesday, 23 September 2009, he quite proudly referred to himself as “Little Frankie”, the little guy who goes in battling for Ellenbrook. Bless him! He is a former member for Swan Hills, whom I actually do have a bit of affection for, and I do see him around the place. It is very nice to see him and his wife, Shauna. They are still very visible in the community, and I am sure he is really enjoying his retirement. But he was in there fighting for a bus lane—bless him—and the former government promised a bus lane, but it was not going to fulfil the promise of the train. It was never going to fulfil the promise of a bus lane. The former government moved some dirt around just to try to make it look like something was happening, but there was no genuine intent there whatsoever.

Let us have a listen, just for a moment, to what other esteemed members of the opposition have said in the past about the Ellenbrook railway line. Mike Nahan, as the then Leader of the Opposition, said that prioritising the rail line to Ellenbrook is out there, but is not needed for 10 years. Mike Nahan also said not to commit funding to Ellenbrook. In October 2017, he was adamant that funding should not be committed to the Ellenbrook train line, and Liza Harvey said that it was irrelevant whether she supported the Ellenbrook train line. Therefore, even the party of the opposition, or the alliance—I do not know what members opposite call themselves—that is ostensibly already there in the densely populated areas did not support the Ellenbrook railway line.

Christian Porter was gutted when he could not see any money from the previous state government on the Morley–Ellenbrook railway line. He said —

“We —

As in his federal government —

have provided near to double what was the expected contribution from the Federal Government [for Metronet] and, even with that, the funding for Ellenbrook did not appear in the budget.”

“It was immensely disappointing for all the people who live in Ellenbrook ...

That was from Christian Porter on 6 October 2017. It was immensely disappointing, and I think that pretty much sums up the Liberal–National alliance’s position on public transport. I could go on. There are just so many quotes here. Even Dean Nalder was a bit of a worm that turned. According to my notes, he said —

They had this as an election commitment in 2008, so you think they would have had it worked out by now.

Dean Nalder himself said that, as part of his government! It is unbelievable. I have some lovely articles here quoting the former member for Swan Hills—little or otherwise—so “Frankie” was in there.

Then we were elected, and the Morley–Ellenbrook line is now well and truly underway. We have the Bayswater station where the deadly, deadly bridge has now been removed and there is no more garrotting of trucks under the Bayswater bridge. That is looking fantastic. It is the junction for the Morley–Ellenbrook line and the Forrestfield–Airport Link. The Tonkin Gap project and the Morley Drive bridges are there. Broun Avenue Bridge is there. The Ellenbrook station is underway, and everybody is very excited about that. Everybody in Ellenbrook absolutely loves this.

Those projects are on top of other projects like the Drumpellier Drive upgrades to get rid of the horrific congestion. It is a huge contribution. There is the Gnamangara Road duplication, the Reid Highway duplication and, of course, NorthLink. That is just the road infrastructure; there is also some really important civic infrastructure like a child and parent centre. Ellenbrook is the fastest-growing part of the metropolitan area with the highest proportion of people under the age of 18 years, yet we were the only part of the metropolitan area not to have a child and parent centre. Again and again, members opposite failed communities like mine in Ellenbrook because they do not care about us. They do not support us, and they continue to undermine, by any means possible, particularly the Liberal Party, this public transport initiative. The Leader of the Opposition, Mia Davies, has called Metronet a vanity project. She has said that it is a “pet city”

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project—again, creating this division between the metropolitan area and the regions. As Leader of the Opposition and alternative Premier of this state, she should be thinking about a statewide approach rather than creating these artificial divisions. We all know that the opposition likes to run two sets of books, and we all know that there was a Liberal Party budget and a National Party budget, which was royalties for regions—two separate sets of books, completely independent of one another. However, if the Leader of the Opposition aspires to be Premier, she should be governing for everyone instead of creating these completely artificial divisions. It is ridiculous.

However, not everyone in the opposition is quite so critical. Hon Dr Steve Thomas in the other place has said that Metronet is not a bad plan and that some of it represents really good investments. He has said that the fact that there are blowouts is something that the government cannot really control. That seems to be a bit of reality checking within the ranks of the Liberals; there are some of them who kind of get it. I wonder whether he is in “The Clan” or the “Black Hand Gang”? I do not know, but there seem to be certain factions within the Liberal Party that at least acknowledge that Metronet is a good idea. He has made some reasonable comments on it.

I want to make an observation that is very important for the people of Western Australia to understand. I refer to *The West Australian* article of Monday, 19 September 2022, by Peter Law titled “North West Central by-election: Nationals and Liberals to talk about a coalition ahead of 2025 State election”. There is quite a bit of conversation at the moment about a potential coalition between the Liberals and the National Party. I think the Nationals have some really hard thinking to do about how much they get into bed with the Liberal Party. I really caution them, because the Liberals do not support Metronet, and they will run interference by any means possible. It has been shocking to see the way that they have been trying to do it through local government. The National Party has to think about who it is negotiating with and how it will negotiate entering into a coalition arrangement.

The member for Southern River made some interesting points in his contribution about whether anyone in the Liberals or Nationals had asked Nick Goiran for permission to table the business case for projects that are developed under their watch. I think the Leader of the Opposition needs to have a very hard conversation with Nick Goiran about the role of “The Clan” in the government that she aspires to lead. Amongst the 700 pages of leaked WhatsApp messages of 20 October 2019 there is a comment —

We got three up in Thea city of swan. The libs now have the balance of power we should get the deputy Mayoral position and be able to cause Rita and Jess Shaw no end of trouble.

That is a direct quote. In fact, Rita and I wore that as a bit of a badge of honour because we were some of the only members who were actually mentioned by name in the 700 pages of leaked WhatsApp messages. Blow me down if, in December 2019, the Liberal stooge Rod Henderson put a motion up in the City of Swan to try to scuttle the Morley–Ellenbrook line project. This clandestine, awful little organisation that says the most abominable things about people, about women, controls the Liberal Party, and the Nationals are about to enter into a coalition with it. Its members will scuttle projects by any means possible, so go in with your eyes well and truly open. Their conduct is absolutely disgraceful. They are a cancer; they are a blight on the Liberal Party and a blight on this democracy. If the National Party aspires to form government, they will rot its government from the inside out, and the electors of Western Australia need to understand that.

I want to make one final point on taking responsibility. The opposition needs to take responsibility for the way it mishandled the state’s finances. The fact of the matter is that, on the previous government’s way out, net debt was projected to increase to \$41.1 billion, and debt stood at \$3.6 billion when Colin Barnett, the former member for Cottesloe, became Premier in 2008. Who is taking responsibility for that? Who is taking responsibility for the profligate waste and the ridiculous increases, particularly to operational expenditure? This minister has just taken us through how the government is funding this project, and the one and only project that is being funded from debt is yours—the one and only! It is responsible financial management and taking responsibility, and the opposition ought to take a leaf out of her book.

MRS J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI (Kingsley — Parliamentary Secretary) [7.55 pm]: The member for Roe knows that I genuinely like him. I think that the member is a very nice person, but I have to say that he gave the most rambling and incoherent contribution I have ever heard him give in this place. And that is saying something! I was not in the chamber; I was sitting in my office watching it on the television and it was probably a good thing I was not in here, because I know that the Acting Speaker at the time had to call a number of members to order and I probably would have been one of them. I heard the most disrespectful, ill-informed and blatantly untrue contribution about this topic.

Mr D.T. Punch: I don’t think the member likes you anymore.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: That is okay with me, because I do not like what he said either. It really highlighted the lack of capacity on the opposition benches to read and understand a budget or even to read and understand a media statement. The government has been very clear every single time it has had to change something, such as scope and time frame. All of that and the reasons behind these things have been made very clear by the minister or the Premier.

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We are juggling the impacts of a global pandemic. I am not sure whether the opposition has noticed, but it has been pretty hard here the last couple of years. It has not just been here, but around the world. We have done a number of things to either extend time frames to try to alleviate some pressure in a very heated economy or move things around so that we are not taking capacity out of the market. The member wants to have his cake and eat it too. I do not know whether members have seen memes of toddlers throwing tantrums on the floor and the mum has put on the bottom of the photograph what they were throwing the tantrum about. It is things like “I would not let him shove a crayon up his nose” or “I wouldn’t let him eat the dog food!” This seems to be what you guys have been doing. The opposition wanted us to stop putting things in the market. I remember the member for Cottesloe asking why we were announcing new projects. When we said it would smooth out some projects and push them off a little bit, he asked us why we were pushing them off. It was so we could take the heat out of the market so that your mums and dads can go out there and get their patios or their houses built and the government was not the one constantly sucking capacity out of the market. Apparently, that was not right either. It just reminded me of children throwing tantrums, and, believe me, with a 12-year-old and six-year-old at home, I see plenty of tantrums, but that was the worst.

The other thing that the member failed to understand is that the government has changed some things and some time frames because this minister cares about Western Australian businesses. Some things changed because Western Australian businesses were under that much pressure that they were not going to be able to deliver, so rather than put extra pressure on them, we said we would move the time frame so that we could make sure that Western Australian steel beams would go in and Western Australians would be making them. Rather than being the one causing the pressure, the government was the one creating the opportunity. I do not think that the opposition understands that.

The opposition also fails to see the pure genius of Metronet. This is not a public transport plan. As planner, I can clearly see this is a land use, economic and social plan. The benefits of Metronet far outweigh how many people we are going to get on trains. Metronet will benefit the many people living next to train stations who can access work and education opportunities. They will not need two cars because they can get on a train and travel to the city or go up to Yanchep or down to Mandurah; they can go wherever the jobs are. I do not think the opposition realises the impact that Metronet will have. It is the biggest infrastructure project we have ever seen in this state. It is not a transport plan. Members opposite should realise that densely populated areas need this service because we need not only public transport, but also housing, including public housing.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.