

PUBLIC TRANSPORT — RAIL CAR PURCHASE

681. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Transport:

I note that the Minister for Transport recently announced that the Liberal–National government had invested \$243 million for new train carriages, bringing the total order to 66 rail cars.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Not to Ellenbrook!

Several members interjected.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Could the minister please advise the house —

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Kalgoorlie, I hope your lips are not moving. Member for Bassendean, I formally call you to order for the first time today.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Could the minister please advise the house on the details of this commitment and comment on any recent public transport pledges made by the opposition?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:

Happy to oblige! The important point to be made up-front is that the rail network in Perth is popular, it is important, and it is used by a lot of people. I think we saw the significance of the rail network when we had that unfortunate disruption on the northern line a little while ago. Over the past three years, patronage growth on our metropolitan rail network has averaged around five per cent. That is well above population growth, and it says that people are, in increasing numbers over and above the rate of population growth, using the train system. The government has a plan to support the ongoing growth of the train network by investing in rail carriages. In the 2011–12 budget, we effectively ordered 45 extra carriages at a cost, if my memory serves me correctly, of \$165 million. Earlier this year we announced a new rail station at Aubin Grove and another six carriages at a cost of \$22 million. On Sunday we announced an additional \$55 million investment to provide a further 15 carriages, which brings the total order—starting to arrive at the end of 2013 through to the end of 2016—up to 66 carriages at a cost of \$243 million. That is a great outcome. It means that we will be able to accommodate some of the current pressure on the rail network, accommodate growth and provide benefits to people on what we call the heritage lines—the Armadale line, the Midland line and the Fremantle line. That will mean that five of the current A-series cars will be fed back into those lines, so everyone across the network will benefit.

The government has announced a little more than just extra rail carriages; I just happen to have a chart here that provides some clarity to the announcement. The green bits at the top that look like trains are trains, Leader of the Opposition. The bit below the line, in blue, is the plan. The time line is that before 2012 we will investigate, order and then invest in a new generation of railcar for the people of Perth. Clearly, we need to move beyond the current B-series car to a new generation car. We will start to look for that next year. It will take us about 18 months to investigate and then procure that new generation railcar. It will probably take two to two and a half years before they are delivered. We clearly have plenty of capacity until the end of 2016, and the plan is for the new generation railcar post-2017. A new generation of railcar means that we can have longer cars that can travel closer together and we will be able to get people in and out of them a lot more quickly.

I thank the member for Swan Hills for touching on recent opposition announcements, and I will quickly touch on a couple of those. Firstly, we had the “fixing train congestion policy”, which was an interesting policy that would provide a sum of capital to buy a number of new rail carriages. Unfortunately, the policy did not provide one cent for electricity, drivers or security and other staff needed to operate those carriages. It was an unfunded commitment—I assume this was an election commitment from the Labor Party. I will remind the house what the member for West Swan has offered the people of Ellenbrook. When the opposition released its transport plan this year, she said that part of its 50-year to 100-year vision included a rail line to Ellenbrook. The member for West Swan is promising the people of Ellenbrook a new railway at some stage in the next 50 to 100 years! That is great news! I imagine that the member for West Swan will rise from the grave to participate in the opening.

The Leader of the Opposition showed his commitment to the people of Ellenbrook when he was out there the other week. I will show the strength of his commitment to the Ellenbrook rail line, which has been raised time and again in this house. When the Leader of the Opposition was asked what he would do about the Ellenbrook rail line, the Leader of the Opposition said —

Mr M. McGowan: You broke your promise to the people of the north eastern suburbs!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Hang on! This is what the Leader of the Opposition said: he is going to talk to people about it! The Leader of the Opposition was asked whether he would build a railway line to Ellenbrook. His answer was, “Well, I’m going to talk to people about it.” Then he said, “I’m going to look at the costings.” The

Leader of the Opposition is going to talk about it and then look at the costings. Is the Leader of the Opposition going to get off the fence and commit to it?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I formally call the member for West Swan to order for the first time today. Leader of the Opposition, I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Here is the challenge for the opposition. We are not going to build the line in our next term in government. Is the opposition going to, or is it just going to talk to people and get the costings? I have decided to help the Leader of the Opposition get off the fence on this issue. Here are the costings! Here is a summary of the costings for the two routes to Ellenbrook, which I will table. I have done that bit of work for the Leader of the Opposition. On the Leader of the Opposition's next visit to Ellenbrook, he will be able to say that he has the costings and he will have to let them know what his decision is. I know what it will be! I know how much the Leader of the Opposition will contribute. It is zero!

The SPEAKER: Minister for Transport, you had a document you wanted to table.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I am happy to, Mr Speaker. For the record, I confirm that the document shows that the average cost of the eastern route, if you take out the upper and lower figures, is \$790 million, and for the other route it is \$910 million.

[See paper 5555.]