

CORONAVIRUS — TRANSPORT PROJECTS

282. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the key role major transport projects will play in this state's economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on what Infrastructure Australia's approval of the Morley–Ellenbrook line means for this much-needed job-creating Metronet project?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this project will support the WA economy during the post-COVID-19 recovery?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for that question.

- (1)–(2) I am pleased to advise the house that Infrastructure Australia has given the Morley–Ellenbrook rail line the green light, formally adding the project to the national infrastructure priority list. Infrastructure Australia found that the Morley–Ellenbrook line was of strategic importance for improving integrated transport options within the corridor, reducing car dependency and easing traffic congestion. It is one of the final hurdles that will make sure that this long-awaited project can be completed, as we committed to. The positive assessment comes after a comprehensive options development identified more than 100 options before a shortlist of four options was assessed during a cost–benefit analysis. Infrastructure Australia found the project had a benefit–cost ratio of one to two, providing \$430 million in wider economic benefits across the community. Early work on the project began last year with the start of upgrades to the new Bayswater station. In addition, yesterday, we announced the preferred proponent to build the Tonkin gap project, which is a major component of the Morley–Ellenbrook line. These works will include dive structures in Bayswater and Malaga, and, of course, all the work along the median strip from Bayswater to Malaga. Two companies have also recently been shortlisted to deliver the main package of works on the Morley–Ellenbrook line. As we know, the Morley–Ellenbrook line will be 21 kilometres long and go from Bayswater station through to Ellenbrook. Stations will be built at Morley, Noranda, Malaga, Whiteman Park and Ellenbrook. It was very pleasing to receive Infrastructure Australia's endorsement of this project.

This project has been criticised significantly by the opposition for many, many years, and I think it is important to again outline some of the comments that have been made by members opposite on this project. In relation to Infrastructure Australia's assessment of this project, the member for Riverton said on 17 May 2017 that it would take a genius to come up with a business case to justify the Ellenbrook rail line.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Well done, minister!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Riverton said it would take a genius to come up with a business case. Of course, Infrastructure Australia has endorsed a business case that has a cost–benefit ratio of one to two and with net economic benefits of \$430 million for Western Australia. The Leader of the Opposition said in March 2017 that the numbers for an Ellenbrook rail line did not stack up. The member for Bateman said in July 2016 —

“If you look at the population, it just isn't there to sustain a capital investment at this point in time ...

As late as September last year, the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow transport minister were railing against the Ellenbrook rail line, saying that we should not undertake this route to get to Ellenbrook. Infrastructure Australia found that the Morley–Ellenbrook line has strategic value and, as I said, significant economic benefits. In just over three years, we have brought a rail line to life, which is a record time frame for any infrastructure of this type. All we have had from the opposition and the Liberal Party are comments about why this rail line could not be built. We have said, and demonstrated, how it can. I am very proud of Infrastructure Australia's assessment and our progress on this very significant project.