

EASY ACCESS BUSES

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

I thank the minister for visiting my electorate last week to discuss various issues, including improvements to Toodyay Road as well as safety on Great Northern Highway. During his visit the increased availability of easy access buses was also discussed. Can the minister update the house on the rollout of these buses in my electorate and across Perth?

Mr D.C. NALDER replied:

There is significant history to this issue and I will attempt to summarise briefly.

The SPEAKER: Before you start—very brief summary, minister.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I will be brief if members do not interject.

In 1998, the coalition government developed a contract for easy access diesel fuel buses. In 2002, contrary to advice from the department of transport, the then Labor government switched to compressed natural gas buses. That required a huge amount of infrastructure spread across the region to ensure that these buses could be gas-powered. Unfortunately, the infrastructure in the eastern suburbs could not support the gas pressure required to fuel those buses, so for a number of years the eastern suburbs were neglected in the delivery of new buses. In 2009 when the coalition government came in, it made sure that the remainder of the buses would use diesel fuel so that we could start to supply those suburbs that were left with old stock. We went on to sign a 10-year 650-bus supply contract in 2009–10, which we then increased by a further 158 buses in 2011–12. We will now start to see a lot of new diesel easy access buses out there, which I think is a fantastic result. I am also pleased to report that there has been a great deal of catch-up right across the metropolitan area. In the coming financial year, approximately another \$80 million will be spent on the supply of a further 123 buses and in our forward estimates a further \$300 million will be spent on the replacement and growth of the Transperth and regional towns' bus service fleets.