

ELLENBROOK — ROADS

Grievance

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [9.40 am]: Minister for Transport, my grievance is about the main gateways to the concentration of population in Ellenbrook. All three gateways have immediate safety issues. The first gateway with safety issues is the intersection of Reid Highway and Lord Street, which technically is at the beginning of the proposed Perth–Darwin highway. The second is the intersection of Drumpellier Drive and Gnangara Road, which is the main entry to Ellenbrook, and the third is Pinaster Parade and Gnangara Road, which is on the alignment of the proposed Perth–Darwin highway and is the second entry to Ellenbrook. I acknowledge that these are currently local government roads but they will need state government assistance. These intersections have been a problem for some time but have been made worse by population growth and our new bus service connecting Ellenbrook to the Midland–Perth rail line via Lord Street to Bassendean. There is a bus every 10 minutes at peak and a bus every 15 minutes off-peak. This is double the bus service that we inherited from the previous government.

In a recent grievance the minister mentioned that \$2.25 billion has been spent on road and rail infrastructure in the past two and a bit years. This is clearly evident in my electorate, and I do not want to sound ungrateful. Some of the good works started and finished within my electorate, which lead to Ellenbrook, so they are connected with this issue, include the Great Northern Highway upgrade, which is near practical completion; the installation of traffic lights at West Swan Road and Great Northern Highway, which has cut some 30 minutes from travel time for commuters; flashing warning lights at Upper Swan Primary School, Bullsbrook District High School and Gidgegannup Primary School; and the very successful flashing warning lights at Great Eastern Highway in Mundaring. I have spoken to the minister about the proposal for similar warning lights at Bullsbrook where Great Northern Highway runs through the main township, because that will be a very, very serious safety issue in the future. Other work that has been completed is the section of Reid Highway between West Swan Road and Great Northern Highway in Middle Swan. The interchange at Great Eastern Highway and Great Northern Highway is underway. All these projects are either in my electorate or benefit my electorate. This is the greatest concentration of road infrastructure within the Swan Hills electorate for the past 10 years. Of course, nothing of any consequence happened during the previous two terms of the Labor government. The north eastern metropolitan area did not have a single major infrastructure project.

I acknowledge that the minister visited my electorate some time ago, so I know that he is aware of all these issues. I also thank the minister for his offer to revisit my area. He will be surprised when he visits Ellenbrook again because the traffic has increased considerably. Ellenbrook was planned as a regional centre and this has finally become a reality with the recent opening of 60 new shops. Ellenbrook is now a destination instead of a point of departure. The people of Ellenbrook now have a spring in their step as they finally have enough shops and services locally that they do not need to travel 20 kilometres to Midland or Morley. Swan Hills has been confirmed as the third largest growth area in the Perth metropolitan region. All roads lead to Ellenbrook, which, as I said earlier, has become a destination, instead of a departure point, for shoppers from surrounding regions. The minister will be aware that the curse of the covenant at Ellenbrook is all but gone thanks to action from our government. The commercial precincts in Comserv Loop that were almost empty and a ghost town are now full, 12 of the Dome complex's 16 new shops are completed and operating, some 60 inner-city units are progressing at three different sites, and the new Brook Bar and Bistro is trading. All this means there are more people and more traffic. Each year 2 000 new residents call Ellenbrook home, and growth in the Perth metropolitan area in the past 20 years has created a new north east residential corridor. The only major roads connecting the western parts of Perth to the eastern suburbs are Reid Highway and Gnangara Road, both of which suffer from significant congestion. We are the victims of our own success, particularly in my electorate of Swan Hills.

The minister is aware, of course, of the discussions about the Perth–Darwin highway that is under consideration. The proposed highway is expected to alleviate much of the existing traffic and truck congestion. The highway is my electorate's number one priority. However, this highway will not be available immediately; I am told it would be some six to eight years before it is completed. The benefits will not flow for a number of years. The safety issues I am highlighting must be addressed as soon as possible. I have some statistics. The traffic volume on Drumpellier Drive is 5 082 vehicles a day, and from 2005 to 2009 there were 25 reported crashes. The combined traffic volume on Pinaster Parade is 15 477 vehicles a day north of Gnangara Road, and north of Main Street it is some 2 853 vehicles a day. From 2005 to 2009 there were 37 reported crashes. The traffic volume at the Lord Street–Reid Highway intersection is 13 497 vehicles a day, and from 2005 to 2009 there were 107 reported crashes.

Finally, I believe the measures as proposed by the City of Swan will solve the existing safety issues—namely, dualling between Pinaster Parade and Drumpellier Drive, and the installation of traffic lights at Drumpellier

Drive and at the intersection of Reid Highway and Lord Street. I am also advised that once these bottlenecks are rectified, the rest of the roads will flow more safely. I thank the minister for his consideration.

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Minister for Transport) [9.47 am]: I thank the member for Swan for—the member for West Swan —

The SPEAKER: The member for Swan Hills.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: I thank the member for West Swan's neighbour, the member for Swan Hills—the better neighbour—for once again raising these issues that I know are important in his electorate. I note for the public record that the member for Swan Hills is a tireless campaigner for the people of the Ellenbrook area. Some people may use another term to describe the intensity with which the member mounts those campaigns, but I think “tireless” is probably the best reflection that I can offer the house this morning.

I will indeed go back to Ellenbrook soon. I will meet with the member and the City of Swan to look at what we can do to address the problems of those three intersections. I hope that we will meet at the Dome cafe, which the member took me to last time, so we can view the outcome of what the member terms the —

Ms M.M. Quirk: It's a successful franchise.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: — lifting of the curse of the covenant, which was a good outcome. Not all Domes are franchises, by the way; some are owned more collectively.

The first issue I will touch on is the Perth–Darwin highway. From the member's point of view, this is the number one transport challenge facing his community. I am now convinced of that argument and we will certainly look at what we can do to progress the Perth–Darwin highway. I must tell the member that I recently wrote to the federal minister, Anthony Albanese, in an attempt to understand the commonwealth's unwillingness to commit funding to the Perth–Darwin highway. The unfortunate response I received was that the commonwealth is not willing to participate in funding the Perth–Darwin highway. In my view, this road will be part of the national road network so there is a very strong argument for the commonwealth to assist. However, we will not be daunted and we will continue to pursue that; we will continue to look at what we need to do as a state, through Main Roads WA, to position ourselves to better work with the commonwealth to deliver some outcomes. It is a small setback, but we will not be deterred. We will help work with the member to solve his number one traffic issue—that is, the establishment of the Perth–Darwin highway. I think it is important to put that on the record.

In relation to the intersections that the member has identified, the advice I have from Main Roads is advice that the member has probably received before; that is, often these are local government roads and therefore they are local government issues. I am not necessarily convinced by the veracity of that argument. I will look at the intersections and sit down with officers from the City of Swan and work out what we can do. There is some capacity within our funding streams to assist local government. The correct terminology is state initiatives on local roads. If there are some things we can do as a state, in providing not only money but also expertise and assistance for preparing either state or federal black spot funding applications, I am very happy to work through that. I will not hide behind the traditional excuse that it is a local government road and therefore it is solely a local government responsibility, although I point out to the house that local governments do receive a significant and growing pool of funding. They claim they do not get enough—no-one ever gets enough—from the state. However, if there are things we can do to assist with local roads within our budget, we are very happy to do that. As the member pointed out, we look at the prospects.

I want to clarify for the record that the first issue the member raised related to the dualling of Gngangara Road between Pinaster Parade and Drumpellier Drive.

Mr F.A. Alban: It is only about a kilometre, maybe a kilometre and a half.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: We might be able to knock that off while I am out there! That is one issue. We will definitely look at that. As the member says, it is about one kilometre. Are they the two intersections at either end of the Ellenbrook subdivision?

Mr F.A. Alban: Yes.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: The other issue relates to the traffic lights at the intersection of Drumpellier Drive and Gngangara Road. I looked at that with the member. I agree that that intersection is very busy and is of some concern. We may be able to tie that project in with the former one. In relation to Drumpellier Drive and Gngangara Road, I think the city has also been looking at a roundabout. I am happy to take the member's local guidance and work with the City of Swan to work out the best thing to do.

The last one is the traffic lights intersection of Reid Highway and Lord Street. I cannot sign a cheque for the member today; however, I appreciate him raising these issues. As soon as is practicable, we will come out to Ellenbrook and meet with the member and the City of Swan to better understand what we can do about those issues.

I also wish to acknowledge the rate of growth in Ellenbrook. I think next Wednesday I will be looking at a subdivision that will soon be launched called Whiteman Edge, which is a little to the south of Ellenbrook. That is broadly in the Aveley area. I was recently looking at the population growth. By 2031, Ellenbrook is forecast to have 45 000 residents. Aveley is forecast to have 15 000 residents on completion in about five years. There is enormous growth in that area, not to mention growth to the south along Lord Street. It is important, as the member pointed out, that we put appropriate infrastructure in place.

Yesterday the member for Nollamara looked at the 2006 census. I was also inspired to look at the 2006 census as it relates to Ellenbrook. Interestingly, 90.8 per cent of households in Ellenbrook owned at least one car at the time of the last census and 75.6 per cent of residents drove to work, compared with the general metropolitan average of 70.4 per cent. That is one of the reasons why there is pressure on the road network. There is a high level of road usage and the area has a growing population. That is why the member has so keenly pursued public transport options for Ellenbrook. I look forward to meeting with the member in Ellenbrook and discussing those issues.