

PASSENGER RAILWAY SYSTEM, PUBLIC DEMAND FOR ACCESS

**8. Mr D'ORAZIO to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:**

I refer the minister to the soaring petrol prices and to the unmet community demand for access to Perth's passenger railway system. What is the Government planning to do to meet this demand?

**Ms MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for Ballajura for the question. It is entirely appropriate that the member ask such a question as he has a passionate interest in our rail system. Putting public transport back on track and giving members of the public real public transport options is a priority of this Government. The last Labor Government reopened the Fremantle-Perth line - closed by the previous Liberal Government - electrified the entire urban system and built the highly successful northern suburbs railway line. In the intervening eight years, not a single metre of track was added by the former Government. Public transport ran a poor second to a road building bonanza. We will be building on the earlier work that we have done. We have pledged to extend the northern suburbs line to Clarkson by 2003 and the south west extension to Rockingham by 2004 and to Mandurah by 2005.

Also, we will not neglect the existing network. We have recently announced a \$20 million package to improve security at our stations. Over the next few months we will announce our comprehensive package of transit guards and transit police, which will see the security on our trains improve dramatically. The hundreds of millions of dollars of infrastructure assets in this State will be used properly. Expanding the rail network is the absolute key to attracting commuters onto public transport. The evidence in Western Australia is clear: The rail option will see people leave their cars and use public transport. The figures are astounding. Currently, about 100 000 people use our rail system each day. With the expansions and improvements to the system, the Government anticipates that at the end of five years that figure will increase by 60 per cent and 160 000 people will be using the rail system every day. That is a very substantial gain.