

RAILWAY (METRONET) BILL 2018

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON TIM CLIFFORD (East Metropolitan) [5.06 pm]: Picking up from where I left off, in closing, I ask the minister to ensure that there is close community consultation with all environmental groups and that the conditions imposed on projects aimed at minimising harm to our precious bushland will eventually be enforceable, as there is no point in having conditions if they cannot be enforced. I ask that as the projects proceed those conditions be closely monitored and enforced if they are breached and that the remaining urban bushland, including Ken Hurst Park and Ningana bushland, is managed with special care in the future to preserve its characteristics and prevent it from falling into a degraded state like so many other sites across the metropolitan region.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [5.07 pm]: I rise to make some comments about the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018. I want to support the comments that my colleague Hon Tim Clifford has already made about the future of Bush Forever sites. Members would know that I have spoken numerous times in this place about the importance of ensuring that we do a better job of protecting our Bush Forever sites and that we are pretty lucky to be living in a city where we still maintain some of these unique bushland sites in our urban area. I want to remind members that when Bush Forever sites were established, a huge amount of science and dedication went into identifying the best places for them to be. Unfortunately, we have not continued to give the funding required to make sure that we are best protecting those sites. It took 10 years for the metropolitan region scheme to be amended in such a way that Bush Forever was recognised. I have spoken before about my concerns that instead of treating these sites as precious natural heritage resources, which is exactly what they are, we seem to keep chipping away at the edges, which is like death by a thousand cuts for these sites. In 2011, I spoke extensively on my motion about the need for Bush Forever sites to be acquired by government and placed into the conservation estate with appropriate funding for management, but, unfortunately, here I am in 2018 and no government has yet listened to my excellent advice, and I suggest that they probably should, because I knew what I was talking about!

I particularly want to talk about the Ningana bushland, which this bill will have a direct impact on. The fragmentation of the Ningana bushland by this rail line is a matter of concern as it is one of the few remaining east–west ecological links in the Perth metro area. I want to touch a little on what happened the last time the rail line was extended. A few kilometres south, the rail and freeway extension from Clarkson to Butler utterly failed to keep intact a major east–west ecological linkage—that is, the link from the Tamala Conservation Park through Bush Forever site 323, Neerabup National Park, Bush Forever sites 384, 293, 382 and 380, through the state forest over the Gngangara mound in the Shire of Chittering. That was a substantial and important ecological linkage. I particularly want to note the way in which ministerial conditions of approval completely failed to provide adequate preservation of that linkage. Condition 8 of the Mitchell Freeway approval was an investigation of alternatives for the facilitation of fauna movement across each alignment. An investigation was carried out, but not to the extent that it should have been. Instead of investigating either an underpass with suitable lighting gaps or an overpass, we simply got the advice that it was too wide for an underpass. The net result was that nothing at all was designed into the project. When the Quinns Rock Environmental Group brought it up with the Environmental Protection Authority when it was assessing the subsequent freeway extension from Burns Beach to Hester Avenue, the response from Main Roads was, effectively, that the connection was already closed off with a fenced-off railway, that there were two other roads—Connolly Drive and Marmion Avenue—and that an overpass would be too expensive and would require rail stoppage. As a result, it was not included in the business case for the freeway extension and was dismissed during approvals of the fauna management plan.

I am drawing attention to the history of these extensions for a number of reasons. Previous outcomes have not been good enough and we need to make sure that we do it better this time. The ministerial conditions of approval clearly did not achieve the best possible environmental outcome and I think it is important that the minister note what happened. I hope the minister will endeavour to ensure that the conditions of approval, should there be an environmental approval, are tight enough for this section extension. Previously, environmental standards were allowed to slip by facilitating a pretty loose interpretation of the conditions, which cannot happen again.

Another reason I draw the previous extension to the house's attention is that the community is often best placed to provide successful tactics to maintain and enhance ecological linkages. One of the pleasures of this job is that I get to meet and work closely with various bushland friends groups. The level of knowledge within those groups is extremely high and the government would be foolish not to take advantage of that localised expertise. A review of the input from the Quinns Rock Environmental Group shows that a number of its concerns and suggested avenues of remedy were provided over and over again to the construction reference group, and at all stages of planning and design when consultation and communication with the community happened. For whatever reason, a great deal of those ideas and the information provided were not responded to until well after the fact. Ironically, the feedback

was that it was too late to influence what was by then a completed design. That is a sign of a complete failure of process. I understand that a community reference group will be developed for Metronet. I strongly recommend to the government that there be a reference group for each line as they come up and that local communities be able to provide proper input to the process. The reference group or groups for Metronet need to be accorded more weight than some sort of community engagement tick-a-box. I argue very strongly that the ideas and concerns generated by this group should be taken seriously and properly considered as part of the planning process.

With the previous extension, there was an expectation that various preconditions for land use across the area would be fulfilled. In 1990, the EPA approval for Burns Beach stage 2 stated that if implementation of the national park rationalisation did not proceed, the transport system—freeway and rail—would not be permitted to encroach on the Neerabup National Park. The Neerabup National Park boundary rationalisation would have been a net gain to the national park of about 369 hectares. That would be the loss of 140 hectares of land excised from the national park, plus the isolation of 63 hectares by the train and freeway lines. The trade-off was supposed to be an additional 432 hectares of land reserved as parks and recreation adjacent to the national park. That land is now zoned as parks and recreation and the majority is Bush Forever sites. However, 111 hectares is subject to a section 16 agreement under the Conservation and Land Management Act, which means that it is managed for conservation purposes. However, the formal protection of the proposed additions has not been progressed and it is not yet all part of Neerabup National Park. It has been 28 years since that bulletin was released back in 1990. The rail line, the freeway and Neerabup Road have not only gone ahead, but we are now debating extending them even further. That land has still not been added to Neerabup National Park.

Should this extension go ahead, I am very concerned that we do not see similar lapses of environmental controls around this corridor through important bushland. It is really important to ensure that this linkage is not completely severed with the equivalent of a bureaucratic shrug. That simply will not be good enough. The Butler to Yanchep extension has been broken into two sections for the purpose of environmental approval because the development envelope of the rail line between Butler and Eglinton has already been covered off by the national environmental regulator under six subdivision plans for the area, and agreed offsets are already in place at a national level for that land. However, those approvals were made prior to the endangered listing of Banksia woodlands on the Swan coastal plain. Life has moved on since those approvals were initially granted. The clearing for the second part of the line, which is Eglinton to Yanchep, will be assessed for the first time.

Documents submitted to the EPA demonstrate that a number of environmentally significant communities will be destroyed by the development and the access roads, as my colleague Hon Tim Clifford made mention of. We are looking at threatened ecological communities of banksia woodlands and melaleuca shrubland on limestone ridges. The priority 3 communities are tuart woodlands and northern spearwood shrubland and woodlands. I understand from the briefing on the bill that the offsets for these losses are still in negotiation and will potentially include rehabilitation options and research activities, along with securing suitable lands for the conservation estate. The question I have for the minister is: where are those negotiations currently? If they have not been resolved, as I assume they have not been, when are they likely to be resolved and when are people likely to know the outcome?

I would also like to note that it is very heartening to see all the agencies coordinating to ensure that all their needs can be serviced by one set of access roads. That is certainly an improvement on the way that practices have been undertaken in the past. I would like to strongly encourage this kind of ongoing cooperation and planning across government because it is really important that we minimise any environmental disruption for projects such as this. In some places, we are getting better at it but we need to make sure that when good practice has been identified, we do what we can to keep that up. I have said this before and I really do not want to keep saying it but it looks like I will say it over and over for a while; that is, we have a problem ensuring that we commit to our strategic direction on planning in this state. I recognise that this is partially due to the sheer volume and complexity of our planning documents. We continue to behave as if our regional significant bushland is simply a land bank for future development or infrastructure location, and that is completely wrong-headed thinking. It needs to be recognised as a precious community resource that is there forever, as the name says, which is what it was intended to be. We also partially have a problem because we continually fail to plan sufficiently far in advance to ensure that new communities in Perth have the services they need.

On that last point, I wanted to make some comments as a member for the North Metropolitan Region about the issue of future growth in the northern corridor. I think it is really good that we are attempting to plan for the future of the northern corridor prior to the expected population explosion. I will compare that with what happened with the Mandurah line. By the time the Mandurah line opened in 2007, the 2006 census showed that 67 813 people were already living in Mandurah, 84 307 were already living in Rockingham and other people were living adjacent to that line at the time. When that rail line was established, we had an existing large population in the south and we did not have an existing rail corridor. This meant that the train line had to be put into the existing freeway corridor, which meant locating the stations outside the cultural and business centres of the towns. As I recall, the Greens were quite disappointed about this as it meant that we lost opportunities to create transit-oriented developments because effectively we were retrofitting a rail line into an existing corridor to meet existing need.

Looking to the north, the 2016 census shows that a significantly smaller number of people live there right now. There are 8 859 people living in Yanchep and 9 945 people living in the Alkimos and Eglinton area. These are very different starting circumstances for this line. Importantly, the rail line and the stations will be operational before the population really expands. The figures are showing us that it will expand. The population will absolutely go skyward. What is more, population forecasts show that not only are the forecasts for growth large, but also they will be happening quickly. In fact, it is expected that by 2031, Yanchep will have added more than 90 000 people to its village so that it will have a population of an estimated 103 000 people. Eglinton will grow from what is currently a pretty small village of a couple of hundred people to a substantial town of about 31 000 people. The area encompassing Butler to Alkimos will also grow quickly to more than 40 000 people.

I want to acknowledge, because it has been raised with me, that it may be the case that due to the economic slowdown through mid-2010, population growth may end up being a little slower than originally expected. We would really have to not know what we are talking about if we suggested that it will not happen. The one thing we do know is that the sort of growth that is predicted will happen, and the only uncertainty is exactly when. That means that by building the train line now before the population grows, people will move into these areas and, importantly, essential services will already be in place. As we saw with the Mandurah line, this is a better way to undertake planning. I reflect on the years and years of toing and froing around the issue of public transport in some of the newer developments and what a headache that has been. It is just a given that trying to retrospectively put in large public transport infrastructure such as we have tried to do, particularly with Ellenbrook, is a less desirable way to move forward. It will also allow for the proper development of town sites at Alkimos, Eglinton and Yanchep. The town plans for Alkimos, Eglinton and Yanchep include the railway station and, importantly, planned higher density and mixed-use town centres that will be built around those stations. That is much smarter development than we had in the past. When I say “in the past”, I mean the past 50 years, but certainly when we talk about the way transport developed in the history of the colonies, that is exactly how it was originally. These developments are at the edge of the metropolitan area.

It is also interesting to look at the projected population demographics. We expect that a higher proportion of the people who will be living in those areas will be young families, first home buyers and also people on low incomes rather than people who live closer to the city. That particularly emphasises the fact that reliable transport will be necessary. I understand that it is intended to ensure better traffic flow to Yanchep and Joondalup. It is anticipated that a lot of people’s activity and work functions will occur around those spaces. It is also important to ensure that those populations are serviced to come into the Perth city centre, particularly as we are growing as a city and more and more infrastructure is occurring within our central city areas. It will be absolutely essential to ensure that people living in those areas can also access cultural, educational and economic opportunities in those centres, as well as within inner city Perth.

There is a lot to like about the proposed rail line. It has the potential to be a major benefit to the population in the far north of the city. It is good to see it being done in advance of the anticipated population explosion in that corridor. I have given members the numbers. We are talking about a huge number of people. History has shown that we have not always followed through with all the environmental elements for these types of extensions and that we have not listened to the community, and we need to. Because of that, in the past we have allowed an important environmental linkage to be broken and thus far have made no effort to restore it—and restore it we must. We are really going to have to make sure that we do a much better job with this rail extension. I ask the government, particularly the Minister for Environment, to ensure that any ministerial conditions of approval for the Yanchep rail extension are driven by environmental need and not by what is most expedient to completing the rail line. We need to make sure the conditions are enforceable and meet community expectations around engagement and consultation. If this rail line is going to go ahead as part of the Metronet suite of projects, it really needs to be done properly. We need to preserve as much of our urban bushland as we can in the process of trying to address the legitimate needs of an ever-growing city, which needs to be appropriately serviced.

As a member of the Greens and as a member for North Metropolitan Region, I will be keeping a very close eye on this. I really hope that the Minister for Environment in particular has had the opportunity to listen closely to what I have raised. I am sure I have not said anything that has not also been raised directly with him by a number of environmental groups but we need to make sure we do not repeat the large-scale problems of the past. There are ways we can ensure that we implement some best practice in this space.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [5.31 pm]: I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018. I do so as a member of the Parliamentary Liberal Party. We have outlined our support for this bill, but I also want to address an aspect of this bill from the perspective of my role as member for North Metropolitan Region and someone who, in the past, has worked in the development industry with interest in the Yanchep and Two Rocks area. From the outset, obviously the delivery of infrastructure into the northern corridor is the great un-locker of potential, but it is important that the rollout of infrastructure is funded and staged properly.

Probably the greatest contributor to the population growth in the Yanchep and Two Rocks area was the extension of Marmion Avenue to the intersection with Yanchep Beach Road. It provided the opportunity for heavy haulage trucks and equipment to start building residential areas. It occurred over nine or 10 years, which was happily coincidental with the great economic boom of the last decade. The circumstances today are obviously somewhat different. Since at least 2013–14, there has been a general softening in land sales from Alkimos up to Yanchep. From one of my many trips up there, I recall seeing inducements offered by some developers to purchase home and land packages. One company was offering the chance to win a LandCruiser or a Jeep model for someone who was prepared to purchase a lot. I thought that spoke in a negative way about the company's own forecasts for the prospects of future sales. The reality is that the population growth in this corridor has come off the boil in a very significant way. I agree with the proposition that all our infrastructure planning should be, to the best of its capacity, focused on future need. But as someone who has worked in this industry, albeit for a short time, the economics and the demographic compulsion to infrastructure rollout is not the same now in 2018, and is unlikely to be the same in 2020 or 2021, as was the case in 2012, 2013 or 2014. I take a little more jaundiced or cynical view to the sunny, upside optimists of population growth. I do not see growth continuing at the rate we were experiencing from 2009 to 2012. A lot of the justification for this project is predicated on forecasts that probably should bear a little closer examination.

That said, I support the bill. I think the provision of rail to the northernmost extremity of the Perth metropolitan area, which is likely to be the next large catchment area for population, is sensible. The responsibility that government and this chamber bears is to ensure that, to the best of our capacity, the rollout of that infrastructure is defensible and we are cognisant at all times of the opportunity costs of that investment. I heard, I think for the first time, today in question time the assessment that the extension of the rail head to Yanchep benefits from or was assessed to have a benefit–cost ratio of 2.6. If that is true—wonderful. The government would not invest in a project that had a figure of less than one; that would be silly. But it is also important to look at some of the assumptions that underlie the assessment. We cannot get to grips with those assumptions. I can understand that when a project like this is taken to market, there are reasons for a measure of confidentiality around the information government members are prepared to give this chamber. It is one of those enduring challenges of being a member in this place, particularly one in opposition, that we do not get to see the information that we want to see. I am sure I am not alone thinking that. I am sure there are members on the government bench who would like to have a little more access to information, if only to satisfy their curiosity. It is important to realise that, even if this project has a benefit–cost ratio estimated to be \$2.60 to every dollar invested, we should evaluate the BCR against other investment opportunities and other infrastructure priorities, particularly those which pertain to transport. The ones I am interested in are the benefit–cost ratios that may apply to the extension or the addition of lanes to Mitchell Freeway. There are lots of infrastructure priorities for the North Metropolitan Region that should exercise government attention but that do not seem to be getting the same level of focus that this proposition for Metronet appears to have been given.

I am also curious about the geographical location of the termination of the Yanchep line. I have consulted the schedule attached to the bill. I have cross-referenced it against the nearest up-to-date online satellite surveys and yes, the termination of this line ends up smack bang in the middle of a Bush Forever site. I want to talk a bit later about the uneven treatment of vegetation. In the other place, there is a view that the Beeliar wetlands bear protection at all costs from the imposition of Roe 8, but Bush Forever sites in the northern corridor do not merit the same level of protection. In fact, we have quite a clear clause in the bill. I quote clause 6 —

Despite anything in the Metropolitan Region Scheme, the following development may be commenced or carried out without the approval of the Planning Commission —

That is a pretty blunt instrument. I do not understand, necessarily, the difference in treatment between bushland in Yanchep and the Beeliar wetlands, particularly when the economics of the Roe 8 extension are very clear, understood by the community and industry, and come with tangible, measurable, environmental benefits. There is a business case for a project in the southern suburbs that is completely disregarded on the pretext of environmental concern, yet we move 70 to 80 kilometres north, and there is a flimsy economic justification for the immediate extension of the rail line through bushland that does not seem to really matter. I find that a ponderous proposition. I just want to understand the rationale. I am prepared to be convinced. As I said, I support future planning and long-range forecasting like this. But the complications that Hon Alison Xamon alluded to in the planning framework in this jurisdiction only become even more complicated when we see, in real time, the uneven treatment of significant infrastructure projects. I am curious about why that might be the case.

The other curiosity I have, about the grid reference provided for the termination of this line, is that I could understand it if certain undertakings were provided by the owners of the land adjacent to that station for a development plan. I could understand the economics of the proposition a little better, and I could probably understand the justification for the government implementing such a blunt instrument in the planning regime and environmental considerations applying to a Bush Forever site. I am very keen, genuinely, in the minister's reply, to understand whether any undertakings have been provided by developers in this corridor, which would, firstly,

justify the location of the terminus and, secondly—although not contained in the bill, it is certainly implied—justify the delivery of Metronet by 2021. I understand that to be the clear objective here. At the moment, I just see a field of green in an area whose development profile has come off the boil in a significant way over the past three to four years. Do not get me wrong; I am a pro-development person. I see great opportunities in Yanchep for a considered, sustainable, interesting built form that is inclusive of the diversity of our entire community and actually makes the most of its environmental assets. It has some very interesting environmental assets—the national park, the caves, Bush Forever and the beautiful pristine coastline. It is a wonderful gem that we have not yet begun to polish. I ask, genuinely, why this blunt treatment, and why now?

I raise these matters because liabilities are being built into our state finances that arise solely because of this—I will not say cavalier—very enthusiastic rush to roll out as much of Metronet as soon as possible. On the basis of estimates provided by the Public Transport Authority in the most recent budget, I think in its out year it calculates an operating subsidy of around \$900 million per annum to operate the train system in Perth as it is today. That does not factor in the significant extensions to the network that this bill will enable. I do not know whether the government has not yet undertaken those calculations or tested its assumptions. It would have had to do that to some degree to put together business cases that it has or will soon put to Infrastructure Australia—business cases that we are unlikely to see in their full, unvarnished form. If we are going to predicate massive infrastructure rollouts like this on assumptions of population growth, I will make an assumption of my own. If the government presses ahead with Metronet at all costs, as soon as humanly possible, it is likely to at least double the annual operating subsidy for public transport. It is likely to add another \$1 billion a year to the \$1 billion a year we are likely to spend in 2020–21 just maintaining the system as it is. I could understand that if I could be convinced that it is affordable and manageable, and can be factored in without increasing fees, charges and taxes elsewhere, and without rapidly increasing, unsustainably, public transport fares. Hon Alison Xamon mentioned the current catchment figures for Yanchep and Alkimos–Eglinton. Together, they comprise, I think, around 35 000 people. That population is reasonably steady at the moment. These people deserve access to public transport—do not get me wrong—but they deserve public transport not at the cost of others, and certainly not within this very ambitious timeline.

I will close by reflecting on an answer provided by the director of the Metronet project, Mr Anthony Kannis. I think he sits in either the Public Transport Authority or the Department of Transport. Fundamentally, this bill builds a liability that we will all have to wear, and I want to understand how we will wear it, when we will wear it and why. It relates to my question about where the development in Yanchep is next likely to come from. During the election, and probably for the first 12 months of the present government, some optimism was placed in the notion of value capture as a way of paying for the rollout of Metronet. Various figures were bandied around, but they were mainly within the vicinity of about \$100 million. I was curious about why there was no mention of value capture in the most recent budget. That hot topic, that innovation, that connection between government and the private sector, just seemed to be quietly discarded, in the way that I think medihotels have been quietly discarded, but that is an issue for another day. Mr Kannis effectively admitted that value capture was a dud—that it was not going to bring in the \$100 million within the time frame suggested, although it might do so over the course of 30 or 40 years. That is a significant point. We are talking about massive legacy issues. We are looking at projects that will not justify the expense maybe for another 25 to 30 or 40 years. There are serious considerations we have to make as legislators, and when we have the pleasure of being in a ministerial role in an executive government. There are always interests that demand our attention and priorities that communities face. The government is faced with the challenge of effectively managing three horizons simultaneously—the short term, the medium term and the long term.

Just to be clear, the opposition supports this bill. I support the provision of sensible and affordable infrastructure in the northern corridor up to Yanchep. I see it as a no-brainer. However, a bill such as this begs more questions than it answers. As much as we may be excited about the prospect of future building, I think we need to take a deep breath and appreciate at what cost we prioritise the rollout of Metronet as opposed to the delivery of other infrastructure priorities. Another disappearing election commitment I might mention is the expansion of Joondalup Health Campus. I have not heard anything from the state government on that for nearly two years. To me, that is an infrastructure priority that should be dealt with in the near term. This is a “good to have” in the medium to long term, but certainly does not demand the kind of urgency that is implicated by the bill in its very abbreviated form or by the timing in which it comes to this chamber.

Not to sound like a broken record, but I implore the minister, who is also the Minister for Environment, to explain to me the difference in treatment. Why are we utilising such a blunt instrument to barrel this railway through Bush Forever in the next couple of years, but somehow the environmental value of Beeliar wetlands is sufficient to bring down forever the prospect of the extension of Roe 8? I will leave it there.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Environment) [5.54 pm] — in reply: I say from the outset that we are grateful for members’ support for the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018. I thank Hon Simon O’Brien, Hon Colin Tincknell, Hon Tim Clifford, Hon Alison Xamon and Hon Tjorn Sibma for their

contributions. It is certainly my intention to address those questions that have been raised during the second reading debate by members, although I am aware that certain members intend to go into Committee of the Whole. They will get a chance to prosecute further their questions at that stage.

Hon Simon O'Brien asked why enabling legislation is required, considering that it is an existing freight corridor and the Thornlie–Cockburn Link was intended to be part of the original Mandurah railway line alignment. The member is correct that existing legislation governs the construction of railway infrastructure within the freight corridor—that is, the Railways (Standard Gauge) Construction Act 1961. The member is also correct that legislation was passed to facilitate the delivery of the Mandurah line along its originally planned alignment from Jandakot to Mandurah. This was incorporated into the Railway (Northern and Southern Urban Extensions) Act 1999. The route alignment defined in the Railway (Northern and Southern Urban Extensions) Act 1999 commences at the point at which the freight line intersects with Kwinana Freeway and allows for the construction of the Jandakot–Rockingham–Mandurah railway in a generally southerly direction along the median strip of Kwinana Freeway and then via the alignments seen today. The previously envisaged route into Perth via the Armadale line, being the alignment of the planned Thornlie–Cockburn Link, is not defined in this act.

Following confirmation of the alignment for the Mandurah line via Kwinana Freeway into Perth, a second act was passed to enable construction of these works, being the Railway (Jandakot to Perth) Act 2002. Neither act covers the alignment required for the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. It was previously considered that the Railways (Standard Gauge) Construction Act 1961 would cover the section of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link alignment that would be shared by the freight railway lines. This continued to be the position for the construction of the Thornlie line spur. However, the Public Transport Authority subsequently sought legal advice about whether this position was still appropriate when considering the extension of the Thornlie line to meet the Mandurah line. The PTA was advised that although the Railways (Standard Gauge) Construction Act 1961 covered this route alignment, the intent of this railway was originally for standard-gauge freight rail lines. Given the passenger rail network in WA uses narrow-gauge track, it was considered that although the powers within the existing enabling legislation already afford the PTA and government the legislative power to build and maintain a passenger railway in this location—including the existing Thornlie spur line, which also falls within the limits of deviation of the legislation authorising the Armadale line—it would be appropriate to enact new dedicated legislation that is more transparent with its intent. As a result, this legislation enforces greater transparency for the community about the type of infrastructure that will be built and maintained in the corridor. Additionally, it was known that the timings of the Yanchep rail extension and the Thornlie–Cockburn Link were similar and, given the need for enabling legislation for Yanchep, it was considered prudent to include Thornlie without imposing significant additional legislative burden.

A question was asked about why this is titled the Metronet bill and whether it is merely a branding exercise. No, it is not. As I understand it, the general guidance or convention is that the name that is chosen for a bill must clearly depict the intent of the proposed legislation. This bill is titled the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018. I do not think that the name leaves any doubt that the intent of the bill is to facilitate the delivery of railway projects in the government's Metronet plan. Similar to previous rail enabling legislation, including the Railway (Northern and Southern Urban Extensions) Act 1999 that I previously mentioned, this is a packaged bill. In its current form, it includes both the Yanchep rail extension project and the Thornlie–Cockburn Link project. Over time, additional Metronet projects may be added, which will merely require amendments to this legislation, rather than entirely new or separate legislation. This bill is intended to be the legislative starting point to facilitate delivery of other Metronet rail projects. As these projects are defined with more certainty, amendments will be sought to amend what will become the Railway (METRONET) Act 2018. The member would be aware that amendments to an existing act generally deliver faster outcomes than the introduction of new legislation. It is also not appropriate to fragment legislation when there is an opportunity to consolidate it. This is not to say that there will not be adequate opportunity to debate the merits of future proposed amendments to the act. However, there is some merit in reducing the legislative and administrative burden associated with fragmented legislation with a common purpose. Given that this bill is ultimately intended to become an act that will be amended from time to time to facilitate the ongoing delivery of Metronet projects, it is appropriately titled the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018, rather than being limited to a description of one isolated project—for example, the Railway (Forrestfield–Airport Link) Act 2015.

The member sought clarity from the minister representing the Minister for Transport about whether Butler was the last new station built or opened. I can advise the honourable member that the last new station opened was Perth Stadium station, servicing Optus Stadium, which was in December 2017. Prior to this, Aubin Grove station opened on the Mandurah line in April 2017. Butler station opened in September 2014 and was the last new station associated with a line extension.

The honourable member sought details of the station locations along the Yanchep railway extension and the timings for the opening of the stations. I encourage the honourable member to browse the publicly available “Yanchep Rail Extension: Project Definition Plan: June 2018”, which I have tabled in this place in the last couple of weeks—it can also be accessed on the Metronet website—for detailed information concerning the three planned

stations at Alkimos, Eglinton and Yanchep, their intended locations and planned development outcomes in the precincts around each of them. The member is correct that unlike the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, which is positioned in an existing urbanised corridor, it is harder to picture the Yanchep railway extension station locations due to the lack of identifiable landmarks. The Yanchep railway extension PDP attempts to do this with both diagrams and a written description using the nearest road intersections and alignment with broader planning, including existing structure plans when available. For example, Yanchep station is described as being located between the future Toreopango Avenue to the north and Yanchep Beach Road to the south in the heart of the planned Yanchep city centre. Given the lack of a completed road network, this is difficult for people to visualise. However, the Metronet and PTA teams have worked and continue to work closely with adjacent land developers and other stakeholders to ensure maximum integration between the planned rail alignment and stations and surrounding urban development. All three stations, Alkimos, Eglinton and Yanchep, are planned to open at the same time when the railway line is completed.

A question was asked about why the government has prioritised the delivery of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link and the Yanchep rail extension over other lines, such as an extension of the Armadale line to Byford. Successive governments have considered that the delivery of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link and Yanchep rail extension projects are a priority or to be a priority. The initial business cases for both projects were funded and significant work was completed under the former Liberal–National government. Further, the transport plans produced under the previous government identified both the Yanchep rail extension and Thornlie–Cockburn Link projects as being a priority, and in the lead-up to the 2017 election, the Liberal Party committed to delivering the Thornlie–Cockburn Link project if it was successful in retaining government. The substantial progress in planning that was inherited by the McGowan government has enabled us to fast-track the delivery of these projects. That is not to say that any of the other Metronet projects are less important; it is just to say that we do not have the benefit of having the same degree of planning work completed, which is obviously required prior to any decision to commence the delivery of a project. When we took office in March 2017, there was almost nothing in hand for other projects, such as an extension of the Armadale line to Byford or a train line to Ellenbrook. Starting from scratch takes time, and while we are catching up with the planning processes for these new projects, significant work is now underway.

The member mentioned that we should be comparing passenger catchment areas et cetera. This does not change the fact that even if the government wanted to advance the delivery of, for example, a train line to Byford, we would not be in a position to start that immediately, due to the lack of planning progress. Neither the community nor the government want to sit idly waiting for the completion of planning activities, so we are progressing projects as we can. The government has not been shy about announcing its intentions to deliver the full program of Metronet projects; however, practical limitations must be taken into consideration regardless of our desire to deliver everything at once. It also needs to be understood that different projects deliver different outcomes; for example, the Yanchep rail extension is focused on providing a new service to new catchment areas, whereas the Thornlie–Cockburn Link is servicing some new catchment areas. Admittedly, however, the main benefit comes from connecting the two train lines, thereby significantly reducing travel time for some commuters. I expect members would agree that the Yanchep rail extension will undoubtedly service more commuters than the Thornlie–Cockburn Link; however, even the Liberal Party prioritised the delivery of the Thornlie project in the lead-up to the election. It is not always as simple as comparing catchment areas for new commuters. The government takes all factors into consideration when prioritising investment decisions.

A question was asked about the Joondalup line, which will ultimately be extended to Yanchep, and that services a significant catchment area that extends far to the east. The question was: why is the government not contemplating a new central train line as part of Metronet, as contemplated by the previous government? In response, the Metronet program was always intended to be a staged program of projects. The government has announced a commitment to stage 1 projects. These include completing the Forrestfield–Airport Link, extending the Joondalup line to Yanchep, linking Thornlie and Cockburn Central stations, planning and building the new Morley–Ellenbrook line, extending the Armadale line to Byford, relocating Midland station and extending the Midland line to Bellevue, building a new station at Karrinyup on the Mandurah line, starting a program to remove level crossings on the Armadale and Midland lines, designing and manufacturing the next C-series trains, planning for alternative transport options to better connect communities, and investigating increasing passenger parking at Mandurah station. The government is conscious of the potential pressure on the Joondalup line and it will consider appropriate public transport infrastructure treatments as part of later stages of Metronet to treat this pressure, should it eventuate. It should be noted that the government is committed to the introduction of an improved signalling system that I am told will substantially increase the capacity of the Joondalup line to support a higher frequency of trains on that line. This is not to say that an additional train line as mentioned by the honourable member is not warranted in the longer term; however, incremental infrastructure improvements should treat any concerns in the near term.

A question was asked about what other projects are part of Metronet and what is the cost, cash flows and project timings. I would encourage the member to browse the state budget and visit the Metronet website, which contains up-to-date information as it comes to light for the full suite of Metronet projects, but I have certainly touched on some of those in my earlier comments. A comment was made about the bill seeking exemptions from WA Planning Commission approval for certain works. The question asked was: why is this the case? I take the opportunity to quote from the explanatory memorandum accompanying the bill. It states —

Clause 13 of the Metropolitan Regional Scheme sets out the primary obligation to obtain development approval from the WA Planning Commission for development on land reserved under the Metropolitan Regional Scheme. Railways are reserved under the Metropolitan Regional Scheme. There are exceptions to clause 13 where reserved land is owned by or vested in a public authority. Section 6 of this Bill expands the exemptions from development control by specifically exempting METRONET works that involve the clearing of native vegetation on railway land in a Bush Forever area from WA Planning Commission Approval and by specifically exempting METRONET works on non-railway land from obtaining the approval of the WA Planning Commission.

Section 6 paragraph (a) of the Bill allows for METRONET works, being works for the purpose of or in connection with a METRONET railway that involve the clearing of native vegetation on railway land in a Bush Forever area, to be exempt from obtaining approval from the WA Planning Commission under the *Planning and Development Act 2005*.

The land required for METRONET works located within a Bush Forever area will remain environmentally sensitive areas and continue to be subject to environmental impact assessment and must satisfy land clearing requirements under the *Environment Protection Act 1986*. Clearing permits must be obtained before any METRONET works are commenced.

Section 6 paragraph (b) of the Bill also exempts METRONET works on non-railway land from obtaining WA Planning Commission approval. For example, works incidental to railway construction will be treated as a permitted development notwithstanding such works are carried out within land zoned for other purposes or otherwise reserved for a public purpose other than railways. Such works may involve “cut and cover” works to facilitate location of the railway line below ground level in the central city zone at Yanchep or drainage works and communications where these cannot fit into the relatively narrow railway reservation.

For the construction or alteration of a railway station, or any related car parks, public transport interchange facilities or associated means of pedestrian or vehicular access, the requirements under the Planning and Development Act and the Metropolitan region Scheme will apply.

To be clear, although exemptions from obtaining WAPC approval are being sought, largely for works associated with the rail corridor itself, this does not exempt necessary approvals being sought from key authorities, including all environmental approvals required under applicable state and federal legislation, as well as development approvals, particularly for train stations and associated facilities, including car parks and bus interchanges, from the appropriate planning authorities. These exemptions are being sought because the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the WAPC and relevant local government authorities have been closely involved in the long-term planning and development of these project proposals, including the identified alignments and station locations. Given that for the most part these projects will be constructed on land that is already appropriately zoned for railways in the metropolitan region scheme, the exemptions sought in this bill are intended to streamline unnecessary project approvals and reduce administrative red tape, given that the frameworks and agreements are already in place.

Hon Tim Clifford and Hon Alison Xamon asked a range of questions. Hon Tim Clifford asked whether there were any impacts on spider orchids—*Caladenia huegelii*, I think is the genus—and tawny possums from the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. I am advised that based on the surveys that have been undertaken, there would be no impact. No evidence of either species has been found following multiple surveys over a number of years. Regarding the question about whether all planned work is within existing rail corridors, the majority of works are confined within the existing rail corridor, other than at train stations where work outside the existing corridor will occur to build associated facilities, including parking, road access and bus interchanges. Obviously, I have made my comments on the role of the Environmental Protection Authority and other agencies with those facilities or types of things.

A comment was made about the impact on Ken Hurst Park. Although the rail corridor travels through Ken Hurst Park, it is already cleared. This project is contained within the corridor, so there was no clearing of any vegetation within this Bush Forever site.

I will confirm the extent of offsets. An offset strategy for each project is still being developed in consultation with the regulators. Options include purchasing offsets and identifying areas for potential rehabilitation. This work is

ongoing and is estimated to take up to 12 months. That question was asked by Hon Alison Xamon. Any offsets could be as much as six to one, but that is subject to discussions with the regulators.

Hon Alison Xamon interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The conversations will happen, honourable member. I confirm that there has been ongoing engagement with community groups, and, yes, we are committed to ongoing engagement with key groups, including the Urban Bushland Council WA and the Friends of Ken Hurst Park. Broader community consultation and engagement will also be undertaken throughout the delivery of these projects, as well as part of the wider suite of Metronet projects as these continue to be planned and move into delivery.

In relation to both projects, a great deal of conversations and consultation has happened with the Urban Bushland Council. Briefings have taken place with the Friends of Ken Hurst Park. Conversations have already happened about the Yanchep rail extension and, as the honourable member mentioned, there was a briefing with the Quinns Rocks Environmental Group. Certainly, as I said, there is a commitment as we move forward to continue to consult. I think it was Hon Tjorn Sibma who asked a question about the termination of a line in a Bush Forever site. The rail line does not terminate in a Bush Forever site at Yanchep; rather, it will terminate in the heart of the planned Yanchep city centre. We have worked, and continue to work, closely with the developers on this planning to ensure the best land use and transport outcomes. The rail corridor traverses the Ningana bushland Bush Forever site south of Yanchep, which is a key focus of our ongoing consultation and environmental approvals process. I take this opportunity to draw members' attention to the previously tabled project definition plan for that project. Page 21 of that document outlines further information. Hon Tjorn Sibma asked a question about the difference in treatment of these projects from Roe 8 and the Beeliar wetlands, which is a controversial issue. Obviously, Roe 8 and the Beeliar wetlands are not covered by this bill. I take the opportunity to say that the government made a commitment about the Beeliar wetlands before the last election and we are moving on that commitment. Today in the other place, legislation about Beeliar wetlands was introduced, and I look forward to a debate in this place when that bill gets here. Obviously, that is not within the scope of the legislation before us this evening; therefore, I will not comment on it further.

Hopefully, I have answered many, if not all, of the questions asked of me. Again, I thank honourable members for their indication of support for this bill. The Yanchep rail extension and the Thornlie–Cockburn Link will have a positive impact and certainly the people of the northern and southern suburbs will thank members in this place. These are projects for the future and projects that the Western Australian community will support. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.