

FORRESTFIELD–AIRPORT LINK PROJECT

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition) [2.56 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That this house calls on the Premier and Minister Saffioti to outline the issues impacting Labor's Metronet Forrestfield–Airport Link and why they covered up those issues.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police, I call you to order for the first time.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This is an important issue. This is the first time that we have had the ability to raise this issue. Its importance goes to the carriage of the most important capital works program underway in this state, which employs thousands of people. It also goes to the credibility of the Premier. Let me go through the reasons for that. Firstly, the Minister for Transport and the Premier had a press conference and inspected the Forrestfield–Airport Link to inspect the bores back, I think, on 18 February. A bunch of the press was brought out. The minister and the Premier looked at it and inspected it and they said that everything was going well, it was on schedule, and there were no major problems with it. We heard rumours, starting with 6PR's "Rumour File" yesterday, that not all was well with the tunnel. Then the media and the opposition started to inspect the issue and we heard other rumours that all was not well. When the media first went to the government, it was told that everything was okay—it was fine. The government downplayed it. Throughout the day, we then found out that the bores had been shut down since 14 February—four days prior to the visit by the Premier and the Minister for Transport when they said everything was fine. Yesterday, when interviewed about it, the Premier said he had just heard about the issue of the bores being shut down yesterday. He expects us to believe that when he visited the boring facility, the largest project underway in this state—a major project that the government has now claimed as Metronet even though we started it and hold it dear to us; it is our project —

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have to address the reason for suspending standing orders. You need to explain the reasons why you want to debate it, not get into the actual debate.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I have to describe the situation to describe the urgency, Mr Speaker, so, please, allow me a little bit of leeway.

The SPEAKER: I have given you leeway so far. Continue.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We were informed that the Premier claims to have heard about the shutdown of those bores only yesterday. This is the largest project underway in Western Australia and employs many thousands of people, so that is simply not credible. It brings into question his credibility generally and in this place. It is simply not credible for the Premier to claim that he heard about that just yesterday, even though he visited the project on 18 February. From what we have heard from the Minister for Transport, we know that she knew at the time of the visit that there were issues, that it had been shut down and that it was facing problems, yet she would have us believe that she did not tell the Premier. That is simply not credible. It is simply not credible that when they visit this large project, she, or her people, do not tell the Premier's people or he is not informed. In other words, he has misled the public of Western Australia. It is not believable. He has a habit of saying, "I was not informed." He did it with the member for Darling Range's issue: "I was informed just before I went overseas." He has a memory issue. This is not credible.

This is, as I said, the largest project underway. The reason we are very concerned about it is that it is our project. We promoted this when we were in government and we put it together, while the other people bagged it constantly while they were in opposition. They complained about the route. They complained about the boring. They said that the boring would not work. I might add that they inherited just two major transport projects that were underway—this project and NorthLink. Our concern is that they are mismanaging this project. There are rumours that there are more serious issues with this project that they are not letting on about. We do not know that, but yesterday we did not know that the bores had been shut down because they had not told us; they were keeping that secret. I do not know how they expected that to happen, particularly when tools have been put down and people have been laid off because of the cessation of the boring. Borers are pretty important people. People talk in this town, especially about the largest project. We hear that there are other serious issues with the project, at least with the timeliness, and we want answers. This is an extremely important project for this state. It is our largest project. When Labor came to government, the project was underway but it has now been rebadged as Metronet. I think there is a little sign out there—it is not very big—that says "Metronet". Therefore, this is the only Metronet project underway.

Point of Order

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 20 March 2018]

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Dr Mike Nahan; Mr David Templeman; Mr Sean L'Estrange

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mr Speaker, the member should be debating the urgency of the motion, not the motion itself.

The SPEAKER: Yes. Leader of the Opposition, I have already given you a warning and you are continuing to debate the motion. The sooner you get it out of the way, the sooner we can see whether the government wants to debate it.

Dr M.D. Nahan: So far we have been told that the government does not want to debate it.

The SPEAKER: That is not my problem.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Mr Speaker, I refer to the motion that has been put. It is under the name “Harvey” as per the motion and is signed by the Leader of the Opposition. I believe it is out of order.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Who read it in and who signed it?

The SPEAKER: Just wait; there is a point of order. I will hear the point of order.

The motion is not out of order. Leader of the Opposition, I am sure you will get to the urgency of the motion. This is not a debate; it is about why standing orders should be suspended.

Debate Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I know that. I am fully aware of it. The motion is urgent because we are dealing with a \$1.8 billion project and therefore it is the largest job-creating project in this state. But it has stopped and we have not been told. We have been told that the Premier did not know about it. We know that the minister knew about it a month or so ago, and we are supposed to believe that she did not communicate to the “jobs” Premier that the largest job-creating project of his government had stopped.

Mr A. Krsticevic: What else doesn't he know?

The SPEAKER: I know that if you interject again, you are going home.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yesterday, when the rumours started coming out, the Premier and the minister were not forthcoming; in fact, they were the opposite. Initially, they told the media, “There's nothing to look at here. Everything's going fine with the project.” As the day went on, we found out that that was untrue. They had known for a month that the project had stopped, that tools had been laid down and people were being laid off, yet they were not forthcoming on the essential nature of the problems. This motion is urgent because, firstly, it is about the honesty and transparency of this government about the largest capital works project underway; and, secondly, there will be an effect on job creation in this state. We, unlike members opposite apparently, are worried about jobs. That is why we committed to the Forrestfield–Airport Link, amongst other things. That is why we planned it for this time—to create jobs during this period of slowness. The motion is urgent because thousands of jobs on the Forrestfield–Airport Link are at risk now.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have had eight minutes to put your case. I am pretty sure you have had a fair run.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No.

The SPEAKER: No; I am not saying that. You have to say why this motion is urgent.

Point of Order

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: Under standing order 3, members must confine debate to the reason for the suspension of standing orders. I believe that the Leader of the Opposition is explaining the reason for the suspension of standing orders.

The SPEAKER: No; he is arguing, member.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member! Members have to give the reasons, not debate the reasons. I feel that the Leader of the Opposition, in the time he has had, is starting to debate the issue. I hope he gets to the point.

Debate Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Mr Speaker, thanks for your guidance. This is about thousands of jobs. People have been laid off. Is that not urgent? I thought the Labor Party was elected with the main task of creating jobs, jobs, jobs. In fact, we heard a dorothy dixer about what the government is going to do about jobs. The Premier is losing them. We in this house want to know what is happening with employment on the Forrestfield–Airport Link. The Leader of the House asks: where is the urgency? Jobs are urgent.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Where is the urgency of the motion? You didn't even use the first question in question time to ask about this. You couldn't even ask the first question in question time.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the House, I call you to order for the first time.

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Dr Mike Nahan; Mr David Templeman; Mr Sean L'Estrange

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The urgency is clear. Thousands of jobs and the livelihoods of people and their families are at risk. The Minister for Transport laughs; she giggles at that concept. That is the urgency. Clearly, we have a minister who is not in control of, or across, her portfolio. She brays about this project being a job-creating machine, yet we have had to force her to say that there are some potentially fundamental problems with the project. That makes it urgent.

It is clear that someone has been misleading us, and I think it is the Premier. He said on radio yesterday that the first time he had heard about this delay in the project was yesterday. That is simply not credible. Where is the urgency? The motion is urgent because if the leader of the government misleads the public of Western Australia on a fundamental issue like this, we need to get to the bottom of it. What could be more urgent than the honesty and integrity of the leader of the government, the Premier? He might be able to explain why he was informed about the stopping of the tunnelling only yesterday; but it stretches the imagination, especially since we saw him visit it. When he was right next to the bore on 18 February, it was not operating. One would ask the question: why visit a bore that is not shut down very often? Why was it not operating? He might have forgotten, which is a worry. Maybe the Minister for Transport refused to tell him and therefore the leader was not across the issue. This goes to the heart of the integrity of this government. This is not the first time the government has been caught out.

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer again to the urgency of this motion. He is not explaining the urgency of this motion.

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: Further to the point of order, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Can I just deal with that one first. No, it is not a point of order at the moment. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will get to the point very quickly.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I must say when the urgency —

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: Under standing orders, he gets a full 60 minutes to put forward his reasons for the suspension.

The SPEAKER: As long as you are doing the reasons and you do not drift off.

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: Correct—as long as he does not digress into the actual motion itself and talks to the reasons for the suspension, he is actually within order.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to have to stand you down, Leader of the Opposition. If you keep drifting out, I will sit you down.

Debate Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I respect that. I will be straight with you, Mr Speaker: what is the most important thing that this government faces? It is the creation and maintenance of work for the population of Western Australia. That is why, amongst other things, we are also for future transport services. I assume that is why the McGowan government has continued with the Forrestfield–Airport Link. It did not rip up the contract, like it did with Roe 8, which destroyed jobs. It continued with this to create and maintain jobs. We hear that people are being laid off. The bores have stopped. Experts are being flown in from overseas to find out what is wrong. The Liberal Party is not against this project—it started it. It is our project, and that is another reason this matter is urgent. This is one of the few projects the government inherited that are on their way—that is, most of them are near completion—such as Yagan Square and the new stadium. Most of those are almost finished. Forrestfield–Airport Link is a major project. We are worried about the government's competence. The government says it is going to build a number of projects. It says it is going to build a whole range of other Metronet projects. Can it cope with it? More importantly, the Labor Party was elected on the basis of gold standard accountability. Clearly, there is evidence here it is doing the opposite. The Premier and the minister went out to visit this facility on the eighteenth. The Minister for Transport has now told us she knew something was wrong. She knew it had stopped. The Premier told the media, "Everything is okay, it's on schedule; no problems." That is not true. It is not believable. But the urgency is we need to explore what happens if the Premier is not telling the truth on this issue. He may be, and that is why we want him to explain himself. We could negotiate a limited period for the Premier to explain himself but the government has chosen not to.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: That is what it has done. It has chosen not to accept our motion to suspend standing orders because it does not want the Premier to stand in this place and explain himself. It is clearly an issue. The Premier visited the facility on 18 February, and yesterday, 19 March, he does not know about it.

The SPEAKER: Member, you are debating.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No—I am just trying to express the urgency of this.

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Dr Mike Nahan; Mr David Templeman; Mr Sean L'Estrange

The SPEAKER: You are debating.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, I am not.

The SPEAKER: Get back to the point.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am putting forward facts about why this needs to be addressed now.

The SPEAKER: I am telling you that you are debating and I want you to get back to it, otherwise I will sit you down.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The urgency, Mr Speaker, is thousands of jobs are being laid off.

Mr B.S. Wyatt interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: They are. They have downed tools. They have been stood down. Is that not important? Is that not a matter of urgency in this state? We want to know whether that is the case. The urgency of the matter is obvious, unless the Premier is hiding from it. It is obviously urgent. Thousands of jobs on a major capital works project in this state are in jeopardy for a period. The Premier does not know about it. Is that not an issue of urgency? I think it is blatantly obvious. They are not agreeing to it—I saw the Premier say no to our proposal to suspend because he does not want to stand in this place and talk about it. He does not want to explain to the people of Western Australia why he did not know about it or why he said he did not know about it. I put it that he knew about it. He knew about it a month ago, but he did not want to tell anybody. He thought he could just crawl through it, that maybe the project would get back up and he would not have to say anything. He had a minister who was covering up and he did not want to talk about it. Maybe it would just fix itself—that is what he wanted. The trouble is he has form in misleading the public. He did that with the member for Darling Range: “I only heard about it right before I went overseas.” The urgency is that it goes to two of the fundamental issues of why we are here: the protection of employment in Western Australia, and the honesty and credibility of the government. I could not identify two more important issues to debate this as an urgent matter. I could not do it. It is enhanced because of the magnitude of the completion of a \$1.8 billion project being in jeopardy and the importance of that project not only to get to Forrestfield, but also to service the airport.

We hear rumours also that there are more fundamental problems with the project. Those rumours cannot be verified but they have to be explored because of the behaviour of the government. We heard rumours yesterday that there were problems but the government was denying them at the time. The government needs to say whether these other rumours are true or false.

The SPEAKER: Rumours is not part of your motion.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Pardon me?

The SPEAKER: Rumours is not part of what you have here.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: You asked me why it is urgent. There are a whole range of issues floating around out there that need to be explored and explained, and that is why we are here. If those are true, there are fundamental problems with the project. It is a big project at \$1.9 billion. I do not know how many people are employed on it. It is huge. It is the cornerstone, so the government claims, to the Metronet project. If it has problems with this one, what problems will it have on the whole of Metronet? I might add that this is the only Metronet project that has a business case. It is pretty well planned out and designed.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I cannot make it clearer why we want this suspension to go through —

Several members interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: This project is the largest employer of people. The largest project undertaken by the state at the current time is in jeopardy. We heard rumours yesterday, which the government denied, but now it admits. The Minister for Transport admitted that she knew about the problems a month ago, but told nobody. She says that she did not even tell the Premier. The Premier agrees she did not tell him. That is not believable or credible. That is the urgency.

Question to be Put

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [3.18 pm]: I move —

That the question be now put.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, I call you to order for the first time. You will not shout across the chamber like that.

Several members interjected.

Dr Mike Nahan; Mr David Templeman; Mr Sean L'Estrange

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Warren–Blackwood, I call you to order for the second time.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren–Blackwood, I call you to order for the third time. I am on my feet. Member for Scarborough, I call you to order for the second time. When I am on my feet, there will be silence.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (36)

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Ms L.L. Baker | Mr W.J. Johnston | Mr S.J. Price | Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski |
| Dr A.D. Buti | Mr F.M. Logan | Mr D.T. Punch | Mr C.J. Tallentire |
| Mr J.N. Carey | Mr M. McGowan | Mr J.R. Quigley | Mr D.A. Templeman |
| Mrs R.M.J. Clarke | Ms S.F. McGurk | Ms M.M. Quirk | Mr P.C. Tinley |
| Mr M.J. Folkard | Mr S.A. Millman | Mrs M.H. Roberts | Mr B. Urban |
| Ms J.M. Freeman | Mr Y. Mubarakai | Ms C.M. Rowe | Mr R.R. Whitby |
| Ms E. Hamilton | Mr M.P. Murray | Ms R. Saffioti | Ms S.E. Winton |
| Mr T.J. Healy | Mrs L.M. O'Malley | Ms A. Sanderson | Mr B.S. Wyatt |
| Mr M. Hughes | Mr P. Papalia | Ms J.J. Shaw | Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>) |

Noes (16)

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Mr I.C. Blayney | Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup | Mr W.R. Marmion | Mr K. O'Donnell |
| Mr V.A. Catania | Mr A. Krsticevic | Mr J.E. McGrath | Mr D.T. Redman |
| Mrs L.M. Harvey | Mr S.K. L'Estrange | Dr M.D. Nahan | Mr P.J. Rundle |
| Mr P. Katsambanis | Mr R.S. Love | Mr D.C. Nalder | Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>) |

Pair

Mr R.H. Cook

Ms M.J. Davies

Question thus passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion Resumed

The SPEAKER: Members! The question is —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That this house calls on the Premier and Minister Saffioti to outline the issues impacting Labor's Metronet Forrestfield–Airport Link and why they covered up those issues.

As this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need an absolute majority in order to succeed. If I hear a dissenting voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put.

The SPEAKER: There being a dissentient voice, it is necessary for the house to divide.

Division

Division taken with the following result —

Ayes (16)

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Mr I.C. Blayney | Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup | Mr W.R. Marmion | Mr K. O'Donnell |
| Mr V.A. Catania | Mr A. Krsticevic | Mr J.E. McGrath | Mr D.T. Redman |
| Mrs L.M. Harvey | Mr S.K. L'Estrange | Dr M.D. Nahan | Mr P.J. Rundle |
| Mr P. Katsambanis | Mr R.S. Love | Mr D.C. Nalder | Ms L. Mettam (<i>Teller</i>) |

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| Mr J.N. Carey | Mr M. McGowan | Mr J.R. Quigley | Mr D.A. Templeman |
| Mrs R.M.J. Clarke | Ms S.F. McGurk | Ms M.M. Quirk | Mr P.C. Tinley |
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| Mr M. Hughes | Mr P. Papalia | Ms J.J. Shaw | Mr D.R. Michael (<i>Teller</i>) |

Pair

Ms M.J. Davies

Mr R.H. Cook

Absolute majority not achieved; question thus negated.