

DENNY AVENUE, KELMSCOTT

Grievance

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [9.08 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport and regards Denny Avenue in Kelmscott. I am sure the minister is well aware of the substance of my grievance. I want to concentrate on two aspects: the absolute need for a solution to the issue, and the minister's failure or refusal to meet with me and also the late Don Randall at Denny Avenue. I believe he has been very badly advised in that respect. The issue with Denny Avenue is that it is the major route to move from west to east or east to west across the railway line in Kelmscott. The congestion on that route has increased enormously over the years. For instance, since 2010 more than 18 000 new residents have settled in the Armadale region. Members have to realise that this is the only way across the railway line in Kelmscott. The nearest alternative rail crossings are at Tonkin Highway and Challis railway station, which are six kilometres and two kilometres away respectively. Denny Avenue is the main access route for traffic crossing the railway line and feeds into the council industrial area, Champion Lakes, two high schools, three primary schools and also a medical centre, which is basically at the intersection of Railway Avenue and Denny Avenue. There are three intersections, two with traffic lights, and a railway crossing within a stretch of 200 metres, plus a railway station about 200 metres from the intersection. As a result, the boom gates are down more often than not. Every time a train stops at the station, the boom gates go down, whether the train is going towards Armadale or Perth. Therefore, we have three intersections, two with traffic lights, another set of traffic lights that have been erected but are not yet operational, and a railway crossing within a stretch of 200 metres.

Back in 2001 the newly elected Labor government created the Armadale Redevelopment Authority, which was charged with the redevelopment of the Kelmscott town centre. It also looked at a solution to the problem at Denny Avenue. The solution that was canvassed was that of constructing a rail underpass at Davis Road, which is about 200 metres towards Armadale from Denny Avenue. The member for West Swan would understand this issue very clearly because she was a student at Kelmscott Senior High School. She would understand that at certain times during the day, trying to cross that railway line is very problematic. The Labor government did a considerable amount of work. In 2007 a consultation process was underway in regard to the Davis Road rail underpass option. At that time it was estimated that the cost of the underpass was around \$33 million. It was going to be a joint project between Main Roads WA and the Department of Transport. The Minister for Planning would be well aware of this under the purview of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority. The MRA now owns some of the properties that would need to be purchased for the Davis Road option to be progressed. From my understanding, the consultation process led to the Davis Road option being the best way forward, but, of course, then Labor lost government in 2008. A community reference group was meeting to discuss the options. January 2009 was the last time that the community reference group met. Depending on how the project was funded and the contingency projects, it was estimated that it would cost anywhere from \$50 million up to \$72 million. The cost would depend on the option that was taken.

The problem has only increased. The problem with the way in which accident statistics are gathered is that they are treated separately, so the accidents that occur at the intersections of Railway Avenue and Denny Avenue, and Streich Avenue and Denny Avenue, are actually calculated as being at separate intersections, but they are basically a hop, skip and jump away from each other. I mean, the world record in triple jump would be nearly as far as the distance between the two intersections, so they really are one intersection. Then there is Albany Highway about 100 metres down the road. So there are three intersections within 200 metres, with the intersections at Streich Avenue and Denny Avenue, and Railway Avenue and Denny Avenue, within 30 metres of each other. The problem is enormous and this government is doing nothing about it.

The late Don Randall and I were constantly in contact with the minister's office seeking a meeting on-site in order to discuss the issue. I do not have time to go through all the correspondence, but on 4 March I wrote to the minister to ask him to meet me on-site, as I believed that cabinet was coming out to Armadale on 30 March. I wrote again on 16 March 2015 requesting a meeting with the minister and also for Don Randall to be present. We also wrote to the Minister for Planning at one stage as well. We got an email back from the Minister for Transport's office. At one stage I think there was an agreement to meet us, but then, due to timetable clashes, the minister was unable to meet us. Mr Randall and I wrote again to the minister seeking a meeting with him on-site and saying that we would agree to his timetable. A number of emails and letters went back and forth between me, Mr Randall and the minister's office. He was always too busy to meet us. So I was really, really surprised and, I must say, incredibly disappointed, minister, when he somehow found time last week to meet the candidate for Canning at that site—not even an elected official. Mr Randall and I were the elected officials and the minister could not meet us on-site, but somehow he found time to meet the Canning candidate. That is disgraceful, minister—absolutely disgraceful!

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [9.15 am]: I appreciate the passion from the member for Armadale. I do acknowledge that he has contacted me on a number of occasions. I have personally been out to look at Denny Avenue. I did so prior to the meeting with the candidate. One thing I wanted to do was quietly investigate the issue without it turning into a soap opera and being politicised. I did meet out there with Main Roads.

Dr A.D. Buti: But you went there during an election campaign!

The SPEAKER: Member!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you! I am going to call the member for Armadale and the member for Joondalup. I want now to get an answer from the minister.

Mr D.C. NALDER: As I was saying, I went out there some months ago with Main Roads to investigate this matter and to really get an understanding of what the options were. I acknowledge that there is an issue on Denny Avenue, but I do need to put it into perspective. I want to work through some of the statistics and the advice that I have received. I do acknowledge the recent tragic incident that occurred, but I have said that this intersection needs to be considered alongside other intersections across the state. The intersection at Denny Avenue and Albany Highway is ranked 588th in terms of crashes. This means that there are 587 intersections that have a higher rate of crashes than we, as a responsible government, must address before we build a solution at Davis Road.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, that is enough.

Mr D.C. NALDER: That does not mean that in the interim nothing can be done. Particularly with trains that are northbound, the boom gates stay down after the train has gone through the station after stopping. I have asked to see whether that can be improved by simply allowing that boom gate to get up to allow the traffic to continue moving through. Another fact is that the City of Armadale has secured national black spot funding to install traffic signals at the intersection of Denny Avenue and Streich Avenue, which will enable the signals to be coordinated with existing signals at the intersection of Denny Avenue and Railway Avenue. This will greatly assist in mitigating and reducing the congestion through that intersection. I have also asked the Public Transport Authority to investigate the timings of the boom gates, but not at the risk of safety.

The Kelmscott committee has sought safety improvements to the Denny Avenue and Davis Road area of Kelmscott for several years. Both these roads are the responsibility of the City of Armadale. Recent developments in the Kelmscott shopping precinct—the new Spudshed store opening—have increased traffic volumes across the level rail crossing, which is resulting in delays during peak periods with queue lengths of up to 500 metres when the boom gates are down. The delays are increasing driver frustration and increasing risk-taking behaviour. The proposed grade-separated rail crossing at nearby Davis Road forms part of the Kelmscott redevelopment and is considered to be the ultimate treatment to address safety concerns at the location. Construction of a grade-separated crossing will improve the amenity of the shopping precinct and reduce the risk of crashes at the level crossing. I acknowledge that the latest advice I have received is that it will cost in the vicinity of \$70 million, similar to what is happening at the Lloyd Street underpass in Midland to allow for hospital access. Preliminary design works for the grade separation project were completed in 2009 and would need to be reviewed for design standards currency. In the interim, to address safety concerns, the City of Armadale has been successful in obtaining funding from the federal black spot program to install traffic control signals at the intersection of Denny Avenue and Streich Avenue. This upgrade will enable the signals to be coordinated with the existing signals at Denny and Railway Avenues, which will provide greater control of traffic at the crossing and associated intersections, and will assist in mitigating and reducing traffic congestion. Works are expected to commence shortly.