

FREMANTLE BRIDGE

582. Ms S.F. McGURK to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the commercial vessel that hit the Fremantle rail bridge and a report from Main Roads Western Australia that identified the risk of the adjacent traffic bridge collapsing from being hit by a vessel was 66 times above acceptable standards.

- (1) Why did the Liberal–National government lift \$77 million out of the budget for the replacement of the Fremantle traffic bridge?
- (2) When is this at-risk traffic bridge going to be replaced by this government?
- (3) Why is the installation of the concrete and steel system needed to protect the rail bridge against marine vessels not expected to start until 2015?

Mr D.C. NALDER replied:

- (1)–(3) The member has raised a couple of points and I will cover each of them. Building a new bridge does not necessarily take the risk away. The remaining life expectancy of the traffic bridge is 10 to 15 years and the life expectancy of the rail bridge is another 40 years. Those bridges will be replaced in due course. This government commissioned a study and determined that it did not believe that the risks are acceptable, so the Liberal–National government is putting in action a plan to address that risk, which is something the opposition failed to do while it was in government. It did nothing about this issue; it is the same risk issue that has existed for a long, long time.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.C. NALDER: What are we doing? We are implementing an early warning system on the rail. The tender recommendation report is being finalised and is due for release on 29 August, so we are talking in 10 days' time.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Fremantle!

Mr D.C. NALDER: The final design, approval and commissioning is an estimated five-month program of work, so it is expected to be finished early in 2015. There is also the pier protection. The scope and design of the pier protection includes five protection dolphins consisting of six poles driven into the riverbed with a steel truss jacket structure and concrete cap. The tenders are due to be released for a combined road and rail bridge works on 12 September this year and work is due to start early next year to be completed by early 2016.

This government is active in this situation. There was an expectation. An independent audit from the port authority assessed that the shoal waters there would not allow a ship of this size to crash into the rail bridge. It is something that has occurred that was unexpected. In the short term, our focus is to get this rail bridge back up and running again as quickly as possible. That is our primary focus. Following that, we will review both the port and the rail safety mechanisms to ensure that they are adequate, and to the extent that they are not, we will improve processes.