

## RAILWAY DISCONTINUANCE BILL 2005

### *Second Reading*

Resumed from 8 November 2005.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [5.48 pm]: By way of background, this is a very similar bill, with the same name, save for the date, to one introduced in 2000 by the then Minister for Transport, Hon Murray Criddle; albeit with some minor differences. This bill has two main purposes: first, it will enable the formal discontinuation of certain sections of the Midland Junction-Welshpool railway; and, secondly, it will enable the discontinuation of certain sections of the Fremantle-Kwinana railway.

The Liberal opposition supports the passage of this bill. I will deal with the proposed discontinuations in turn. According to the parliamentary secretary's second reading speech, the Midland Junction-Welshpool railway has not been used for freight operations for 14 years. Schedule 2 of the bill states that the proposed closure will involve about 2.9 kilometres of railway from Pilbara Street in Welshpool to the north eastern boundary of Railway Parade. I require the parliamentary secretary to clarify which portion of the railway is being discontinued. The parliamentary secretary states in her second reading speech -

It is proposed to partly dispose of and partly lease the land comprising the alignment of the Midland Junction-Welshpool railway between Daddow Road, Kewdale, and Railway Parade, Welshpool, . . .

Daddow Road is not referred to in the bill. I remain unclear about whether the rail section between Daddow Road and Pilbara Street has already been discontinued. If it has not been, is it the government's intention to discontinue this section? Does the government intend to lease this section? My recollection of the departmental briefing last year is that this section was not being discontinued. I would appreciate the parliamentary secretary's advice on this aspect. Notwithstanding that clarification, I understand that the proposed closure of this section of the Midland Junction-Welshpool railway has been discussed at a number of planning workshops as part of the Kewdale-Hazlemere region integrated master plan study. I understand that the outcome from these workshops was that the nominated section for discontinuance would not be required for future transport purposes. I further understand that the relevant zoning has already been changed.

I now turn to the second section identified for formal discontinuation in this bill. This section refers to approximately 2.7 kilometres of rail along the Fremantle-Kwinana railway line, which has not operated since 1984. Again, I recall from the departmental briefing that some parts of this section have been built over but have never officially been closed. I understand that it is now a railway to nowhere. I understand also that some of the proposed rail closure forms part of the south Coogee redevelopment area and will be ultimately on sold to Port Catherine Developments Pty Ltd. Should this bill pass, and these rail sections subsequently close, I understand that this will enable the Port Coogee project to proceed. That project will involve, among other things, the development of a range of single and multiple residential lots and canal lots, as well as commercial developments; the construction of a marina, together with breakwater boat harbour jetties, moorings and associated amenities; and a number of community facilities. Finally, I have been advised that the proposed discontinuation will not affect the Fremantle to Welshpool standard gauge rail, which meets the needs of the Fremantle port. This discontinuation will respond also to maintenance and safety issues surrounding the site.

In conclusion, I again reiterate the opposition's support for this bill and, subject to the parliamentary secretary's clarification on the Daddow Road and Pilbara Street section, its subsequent passage through this chamber.

**HON MURRAY CRIDDLE (Agricultural)** [5.52 pm]: We have just heard a very clear understanding of what the bill represents. I am a little nervous when I listen to second reading speeches on bills which have been introduced and which I have had something to do with, because without exception, and regardless of how good those earlier things were that I did, the minister criticises just about everything I did as the previous Minister for Transport. Judging from the way the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is managing the south west metropolitan railway, some people might think that perhaps things were done pretty well when I was the minister and that this bill will not be too bad after all.

Bearing in mind that the Public Transport Authority will receive into the Public Transport Authority account the money provided for in this bill, I would like to know where those funds will be spent. I cannot recall any of the money that has been put into the Westrail system being spent on the railway. I want some clarification on that matter. I know what the former government was going to do with some of those funds. It had planned to use those funds to finance the southern transport corridor in Geraldton. The minister continually says that that was not going to happen, but that is the way we were going to fund it. A cabinet decision had been made. Although I know it was not provided for in the budget, that is what was going to flow on from the sale of land. This represents an opportunity to put money back into that sort of situation. In the second schedule, \$1.5 million will be received from the Port Catherine development. There will also be \$1 million from the Public Transport Authority's land rationalisation program. I would like to know where the money will be expended as a result of

the sales. I note that there will be some benefit for the Public Transport Authority concerning a Transperth bus depot. The Swan River Trust will benefit as well through a reduction in nutrients in the Canning River. From my point of view, that is a transfer of moneys from a rail system to other areas, including the public transport system in Perth. As everybody knows, the cost recovery from the public transport system is only about 30 per cent; it is heavily funded by the public purse. These are the few issues on which I would like some clarification.

I realise that the rail lines have not been used for quite some time; that is, about 14 years in the case of the Midland Junction-Welshpool area line, and the other lines involved have not been used since about 1984. They are certainly areas that can be closed. Legislation has also been passed concerning rail freight. If the closures are to happen, they will have to be approved by Parliament. The process has been encompassed into the legislation. I have no opposition to this bill but I would like some clarification about where the moneys will be spent and whether they will be spent in a way that will benefit the railway system.

**HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West)** [5.57 pm]: This bill has risen up the list of urgent bills to be considered. When I first read it, it appeared to be relatively simple. It comprises a few clauses which, as Hon Donna Taylor -

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** She is not Taylor anymore - the big event has happened.

**Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN:** That is right; she is not Taylor anymore.

The honourable member gave a summary of the second reading speech. There are three separate areas that need to be dealt with in a bill like this, which deals with the disposal of land and the reassignment of the value of the land to private interests. Let me go from the top down. There is the matter of urban transport and closing public transit routes, which this bill does. The second thing is that the purpose of the bill is to follow a very simple procedure: to dispose of the land, to transfer it to the Public Transport Authority, and then for the Public Transport Authority to be given the right to deal with the land. In this instance, it will have the right to on sell it to a private entity; namely, the Port Coogee developers. The questions then arise: for what purpose is the land being on sold and where is the public good? Where is the value to the state in on selling the land to private developers? We understand that the government needs to fund its schools, hospitals and public infrastructure from the assets that the state owns. In this instance, there has been considerable public controversy around the termination and the sale of the land at Port Coogee.

I want to go back to the beginning in terms of what it means for a government to sell its public transit routes. This takes us, as a community, to the establishment of public infrastructure and transit routes for public purposes. We know that, as time goes by, it is extremely difficult to reverse decisions. We know that it is extremely difficult to establish public transit routes, easements and alignments. The Servetus Street alignment went on for the best part of 20 to 25 years when a public transit route was being established through that area. We have the issues of the Fremantle bypass and bypasses in regional areas. As our land use planning and our urban areas become more complex, we must be very careful about selling public transit routes.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm*

**Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN:** Madam Deputy President, I seek leave to continue my comments at a later stage of this day's sitting.

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later stage of the sitting.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Kim Chance (Leader of the House)**.