

METRONET — CONSTRUCTION DISRUPTION

Grievance

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [9.57 am]: I grieve today to the Minister for Transport regarding disruption and poor communication for residents living adjacent to Metronet works. I acknowledge Victoria Park residents Gary Sandford and Di Piper in the public gallery. Problems for residents from Metronet are not new. Two years ago, Bayswater residents reported to me that their lives and homes were disrupted due to the airport line works and a lack of meaningful engagement from the project team. Those near the station are now at the end of their tether while nightworks continue. Questions posed on Metronet Facebook pages are often left unanswered despite the Metronet webpage pledge —

We will talk to communities and local businesses within METRONET project areas as often and as early as possible.

Today I will focus on the Victoria Park–Canning rail crossing removal project and works in Beatty Avenue and Gresham Road in Victoria Park. It is by pure chance that Beatty Avenue resident Gary Sandford was able to request a property precondition survey prior to works commencing to dig up Beatty Avenue for undergrounding of power cables as part of the project. Gary returned home on 24 August 2022 to find staff from OHS Inspect at his front gate. They offered to do a property preconstruction survey. Gary was told to contact the contractors, Cape, for a copy of the report. Ten years ago, Gary and his partner had invested \$250 000 in renovations that involved structural work, replacement of ceilings, cornices and flooring. The house and garden were immaculate before the Metronet-enabling works commenced. A scan of the Metronet community Facebook page confirms the difficulty residents have in obtaining a copy of the property precondition report. In Gary's case, numerous emails to Metronet, Cape and Western Power yielded nothing. He contacted the minister's office, and the report was released.

Beatty Avenue was dug up, but residents were not kept in the loop. On at least four occasions, residents received a knock on the door at 7.00 am and were told they had between 15 and 30 minutes to move their vehicles or they would not be able to leave for the day. That included Gary's neighbour, who has a newborn baby, and an elderly woman down the road, who had to park some distance from her home and carry her groceries. Dust mitigation measures were not put in place until February 2023, long after the works commenced. Gary sent numerous emails to the communications and engagement manager at Metronet, many of which went unanswered, but when he made contact, he was assured that residents would be communicated with moving forward.

Following a morning incident in November 2022 in which residents were told to move their vehicles for the day at 7.00 am, and frustrated with the appalling lack of engagement, Gary asked to speak with the project manager and was directed to the Cape site office. Gary complained about the lack of communication and workers' vehicles parked on the street verge, leaving residents nowhere to park. The project manager told Gary, "I'd have blocked you in at your house, too." Gary said he was ushered out of the site office and felt physically intimidated.

Beatty Avenue has been dug up at least three times. Gary said workers intentionally park on his verge, destroying his street trees, lawn and reticulation, which are yet to be replaced. The asphaltting of Beatty Avenue was delayed and, in the absence of updates from the Metronet team, residents posted a question on the Metronet community Facebook page on 16 August 2023 asking when the road would be sealed. That question remained unanswered for five months. The pot-holed, dirt road was sealed almost 14 months after it was initially dug up. It will be dug up again on 2 April. The locals can be forgiven for thinking that the letter they received from the Metronet community engagement team is some sort of early April Fool's Day notice. With reference to the roadworks, it reads, in part —

... works took longer than expected and we would like to express our gratitude for your patience.

...

Unfortunately, testing has revealed that remediations works are required to the previously sealed sections of Beatty Avenue ...

As a result, the road base and sealed layer on Beatty Avenue between Miller and Dane streets will be replaced. Works will start on Tuesday 2 April ...

Access to residential driveways may be impacted and a works notice with detailed information will be provided ...

We understand the works are of a disruptive nature and this is not the news you were hoping for ...

It certainly is not.

I ask the minister why Metronet commits to setting up community Facebook pages when it has no intention of engaging meaningfully with community members and answering their questions in a timely fashion. A simple time line and report card would keep residents updated.

There is obvious damage to Gary's house from the roadworks. He repeatedly requested a completion date for the heavy works from Cape so that a dilapidation reinspection report could be carried out. The property reinspection report was carried out on 11 January 2023. According to my notes, correspondence from the minister's office to Mr Sandford dated 7 March 2023, which included the dilapidation report, states, "Cape has advised it will remedy any damages caused by the works, as identified in the attached inspection report." Damage to bedrooms and the lounge and dining rooms were noted, but Cape said damage to the house stumps, which affected the internal floorboards, would not be repaired—it claimed that it was a function of the home being 100 years old—despite the precondition report detecting no floorboard movement. Mr Sandford says an initial quote for stump and floorboard repairs is in the region of \$50 000.

Di Piper bought her Gresham Street house in Victoria Park in 2012. The home had been recently restumped and was relevelled in 2017. Many interior walls have been replaced, along with the roof, verandah and benchtops. The front has also been repointed. The house level was again addressed in 2023 when a verandah was added. Di requested the precondition report, but she is not sure how to access that report. Given that Di's house fronts the rail line, her sleep has been severely disrupted by the night works taking place 20 metres from her house, and she has had to relocate a number of times. She says that although Metronet gave advance notice of the night works, the information was not specific. She says that contractors have been disrespectful, tooting and yelling at 4.00 am, with no effort to keep their voices down. There has been no regard for residents' health or wellbeing. Since Christmas, Di has noticed a great deal of physical movement in the structure of her house, which she attributes to the Metronet works. Her gate will not close, the kitchen benchtop now has a gap, the bathroom vanity has come away from the wall, the floorboards throughout the house are flexible and shifting, the verandah posts wobble, tiles have cracked, the alignment of her stairs has changed, and the left side of her house has dropped. She is not sure whether the major works are complete, but there has been no offer of a dilapidation report. Di fears that she will be inadequately compensated for the damage caused by the rail works.

Why should Gary, Di and other residents be financially out of pocket as a result of the adjacent Metronet works damaging their homes? Also, why have there been shortcomings in communications with Metronet?

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [10.04 am]: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the grievance. I also acknowledge local residents in the chamber.

First of all, as I have said on many occasions, we apologise for the significant disruption that our roadworks and Metronet are causing around the state. Part of building new infrastructure is, of course, disruption, and that impacts people. When we go around the state, whether to Albany, Bunbury or the Metronet sites, there is disruption, and we apologise for it. Many people have been extremely patient, and I thank them very much.

The Leader of the Opposition raised Bayswater. The community has been very, very patient. Of course, that site has been undergoing significant works. We are now in the last months of that significant work, so I say a big thankyou to those Bayswater residents.

Turning to Metronet, and in particular the level crossing removal, I acknowledge that the Beatty Avenue works have had some serious issues, and I want to go through them. Part of the Metronet level crossing removal project was undergrounding the high voltage transmission lines in that area. That work was undertaken by Western Power, which used a contractor to underground the works and then redo Beatty Avenue. I know the area very well. I turn to a couple of issues with the work that happened on Beatty Avenue. One was that initially the work undertaken on the underground powerlines was faulty, so the powerlines had to be redone. Then, of course, the road contractor did not deliver the road to the satisfaction of the Town of Victoria Park. We understand that there has been more disruption than would normally be the case because the works that were concluded along Beatty Avenue, I think between Miller and Dane Streets, were not what was expected by the Town of Victoria Park. That is why a decision has been made to redo those works, and they will be done during the school holiday period in order to minimise impact on local schools. Again, we apologise. This contractor did not deliver works of the quality that Metronet and the Town of Victoria Park wanted, so more work has to be redone.

I turn to communication. I apologise if people were not informed as often as they would like to have been. We have instituted a program of communication. In this instance, the works were part of the Metronet program but delivered through Western Power and then a subcontractor. I have information about emails and communication, but, again, I apologise if people were not informed in sufficient time about works happening on the day in order to move cars. I know what it is like. People are busy, they have families, and it is very disruptive to have to move their cars in a short time. We have instituted support. The office of the member for Victoria Park has raised a number of issues with us. We have been trying to work with the families affected—in particular, helping families with facade cleaning because of the dust that has been created by some of the work. There is help available for facade cleaning.

I will take the issue of property condition reports on board. Before works, we always do a precondition report to understand the condition of a property, and then one is done at the end to see whether our works have affected it.

I know it is always a contentious issue because people have different views about what the project has or has not caused. I will follow up on both properties that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned to see exactly the status of the reports and what engagement we can have in the future.

As I said, we have instituted a program of regular newsletters. There are email lists; people can join those pages. I am sorry that people did not get responded to quickly on them.

We have a number of different fronts that we are working on across the area. As people understand, those works, including the removal of level crossings, will benefit the entire community. We know that individuals have different views, and I understand and respect those views. As I said, precondition surveys were offered. I will gain further advice on those two properties. I am sorry that we did not have the details of those two properties in preparation for this grievance, so we will follow that up. I will work with the local member, Hannah Beazley, and the residents to ensure that the Metronet team improves its communication in that area.

This is a particularly tricky case because of the number of parties involved; it is not just Metronet and the alliance delivering the project. It is Western Power undergrounding the lines and the contractor constructing the road. I apologise for all the inconvenience. People have to live through it. I understand that it impacts their lives, but this infrastructure is for the betterment of the entire community, improving opportunities for people to move across the suburbs. We are doing all we can to minimise the disruption. One of the reasons we closed the Armadale rail line, for example, is to limit any disruption after hours. If we kept the rail line open, a lot of those works would have been completed overnight and had a different impact. We are trying to manage it as best we can. I know that sometimes we do not meet the mark that people expect, but we will continue to strive to improve and have better communication.