

STATE BUDGET 2013–14 — ROAD FUNDING

**552. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the withdrawal of funding by the Liberal–National federal government for the highly important road projects on North West Coastal Highway and Great Northern Highway, thereby creating a \$481 million hole in the minister's budget.

- (1) Did the minister write to Mr Abbott prior to the election to seek the federal coalition's support for these roads; and, if not, why not?
- (2) Will the minister guarantee that these vital road projects will still be completed on schedule, as identified in the minister's budget, in August this year?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:**

- (1)–(2) The short answer is no and no. I think I have dealt with this in the house previously. I will send the member for Collie–Preston a copy of the transcript from *Hansard* if he would like me to. I will repeat very briefly what I said at the time.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** It is a fact; I have spoken about this in the house. I cannot help it if the member for Collie–Preston was not listening.

I have written to Warren Truss. I said at the time —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Who's he?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** He is the federal Leader of the National Party and the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia. He is the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, member for Bassendean. He will be in charge of transport in this country for a long time to come because of the nature of the federal election result, which saw the member's side of politics completely repudiated by the people of Western Australia. That is who he is. Are there any other questions?

I move on. I said at the time that following the federal election and once the ministry was known, we would write to the relevant ministers. I have written three or four different letters —

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Victoria Park!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** One letter was to the federal minister responsible for fisheries because I have some interest in some of the federal marine parks. I wrote one to the new federal Treasurer because I have some interest in how the new federal government will treat iron ore fines for the purposes of the GST process that the Premier outlined.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Victoria Park!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The third letter was to Warren Truss. It basically says "Dear Warren" and goes on and works through a range of things.

It is a very important question, member for Collie–Preston, and we will break it down into a number of components. For example, an announcement was made earlier this year by the then federal government, my mate Albo, about a redistribution of some unspent money out of what was called the NB1—that is, Nation Building Program 1 funding. Some of that unspent money was approved for putting an extra lane on Kwinana Freeway south between Roe Highway and Armadale Road, which will be a great outcome. Some of it went into passing lanes on Great Eastern Highway out around Southern Cross, which again will be a great outcome, and there was a small amount for some rail planning projects. I have written to the federal government and asked for its confirmation around that package of funding.

The second issue I have sought confirmation on is the enhanced commonwealth contribution that the federal government offered during the election campaign to the much-needed Perth–Darwin highway. I have sought clarification on that.

The third point we sought clarification on was the grouping of what I call new announcements that were embedded by the former federal government at the time of the budget. One of those very important roads is Great Northern Highway, particularly the section between Muchea and Wubin. It is the most degraded section of Great Northern Highway. We are currently spending about \$40 million upgrading a section of it known as the Bindi Bindi bends, but there is more to be done. The second part that the member rightly identified is the stretch of North West Coastal Highway, effectively between what is known as Barradale—although the Barradale

roadhouse blew down and has not been rebuilt—which is Onslow, and Minilya. If the member drives through that area, he will see that it is a particularly dangerous section of North West Coastal Highway.

We have sought clarification from the commonwealth about its commitments to those projects. The road funding model used in the state has the commonwealth contributing 80 per cent and the state contributing 20 per cent. The reality is—this is a serious reality for the state—if the commonwealth withdraws money from those projects, it is unlikely that they will go ahead. When I get confirmation from Hon Warren Truss, I will let the member for Collie–Preston and the house know. It may well be our first significant argument with the new commonwealth government. If that has to be the case, so be it.