

RAILWAY (BUTLER TO BRIGHTON) BILL 2009

Second Reading

Resumed from 10 March.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [3.43 pm]: I think that the last time I was on my feet speaking on this bill was in March. I wanted to reiterate some of the comments I made at that time, in case my colleagues or members opposite have forgotten the points I was making. This bill relates to the extension of the northern suburbs rail line from Butler to Brighton. Of course, the Labor Party supports this bill because the extension of the rail line in the northern suburbs was something that Labor had committed to. Labor has been the party in Western Australia committed to railways and to rail extensions. Of course, it was Labor that built the Perth–Mandurah railway. It was Labor that extended the railway to Clarkson. It was Labor that a number of years ago built the northern suburbs rail line; and it was Labor that built the new spur line through to Thornlie. Labor is the party that supports public transport in Western Australia, and, of course, railways. Labor endorses this bill. I know that the member for Mindarie has particular comments about a new station being located at Butler, and we will hear some further comments later today. Overall, the opposition endorses and agrees with the extension of the rail line through to Brighton.

Railways are also very important to people in my electorate. We have the issue of the Ellenbrook rail line, which was a core election commitment made by the Liberal Party in September 2008. I wanted to reinforce the strength of the commitment that members opposite made at the time because I know some confusion has arisen about whether there was an election commitment. I thought I would go through again and explain how it was a key election commitment of members opposite. I want to refer first to the pamphlet distributed by the member for Swan Hills that states that the Liberals would build a rail line to Ellenbrook. A subheading reads, “Delivering rail for Ellenbrook”. The member for Swan Hills states that a Liberal government will build a rail line to Ellenbrook.

Mr R.F. Johnson: We just did not say when!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: When?

Mr R.F. Johnson: We certainly did not say in this term of government.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is the member for Hillarys saying that his party did not put a time frame to this commitment? I am going to refer to the Liberal Party’s election costing booklet that was released during the 2008 election period that showed a time frame for this promised rail line to Ellenbrook.

Mr R.H. Cook: When?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am glad that the member for Kwinana asked. The time frame shows that \$13 million would be allocated for 2010–11. Goodness gracious me! That is this budget year. Members opposite promised \$13 million for the commencement of the rail line in 2010–11, and \$40 million in 2011–12 to construct the rail line. I now go to the Liberal–National government’s *2008–09 Government Mid-Year Financial Projections Statement*, which was released three months after winning government, to again reinforce the costings booklet and the election commitments that were given during September 2008. I am going to page 100 of the midyear review, which is headed “*Election Commitments — Ellenbrook Rail Line*” and reads —

Construction of the Ellenbrook Railway Line (Midland Line Spur) is expected to commence 2010–11.

Dear, oh dear, oh dear! The member for Hillarys cannot make it up as he goes along. Two minutes ago he said there was no time frame, and now he knows there was a time frame, now he is blaming something else.

Mr P. Papalia: It must have been a lie!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It must have been a lie!

Mr R.F. Johnson: There was an international financial crisis that affected everyone.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The midyear review was released after the GFC hit. I think the member for Hillarys has the timing wrong.

We had the election pamphlet, the costing booklet and the midyear review, which was released after the GFC hit and after amendments were made to the budget taking into account the GFC. If the GFC was an excuse, this allocation should not have been in the midyear review that was produced after the GFC hit Western Australia and after we experienced its worst effects, because at that time revenue had recovered.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Is this anywhere near Butler?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, it is. Members opposite gave a clear commitment to build the Ellenbrook rail line. Since the midyear review of December 2008 we have seen an abandoning of the election commitment. Like I

said, it would be fine if the Liberal government came out and said that it was not building this railway and it was breaking its election commitment. If members opposite were up-front and honest with the people of the area, we could move on and try to determine what public transport option is best. But the government is not doing that, so we have nothing: we have no Ellenbrook rail line, no replacement public transport and no recognition of any election commitment. All we have had is comment after comment by the local member, the Minister for Transport and the Premier that basically leaves people in Ellenbrook wanting to know exactly what this government's commitment is to providing them with better public transport.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Where is the member for Swan Hills? He is not in the house. I know what he is doing: he is eating that interesting melon that is out there.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think he stole my sausage roll, because he is that type.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members on my left, especially the member for Mandurah, I am sure you want to hear what your own member is saying.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In respect to the Ellenbrook rail line, a clear commitment —

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Ocean Reef, if you want to make a decision take the chair and make that decision.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Ocean Reef is always so hostile in this Parliament. He is terrible.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, I am giving the member a bit of licence, but I want to make sure we keep on track please.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: As I said the government made a clear election commitment that was reinforced in the midyear review. Since then we have been trying to find out exactly what is happening to the Ellenbrook rail line.

In the 2009–10 budget some of the money for the Ellenbrook rail line, to which I referred previously, was pulled out and \$10 million remained in 2012–13 for the Ellenbrook public transport master plan. I thought, again, that possibly we will see the Ellenbrook rail line. However, in the 2010–11 budget, the line item in respect to the Ellenbrook train line has disappeared altogether. It has all gone. Instead, the 2010–11 budget states —

A 20 year public transport plan is being developed to identify areas for further investment in high volume 'mass transit' services, especially those linking the Central Business District and the major new centres of activity, for example the evaluation of public transport options, including rail services to service the Ellenbrook community.

We saw a very clear commitment by this government to build the Ellenbrook rail line and now we see a paragraph in the budget papers referring to mass transit services with the possibility of doing something for the people of Ellenbrook. We have seen a clear abandoning of a key election commitment.

I will quote from *Windows on Ellenbrook*, which in February 2010 published an article about the Ellenbrook rail line. I think it was the last of the local media to actually investigate exactly what has happened to the rail line. The headline was, "Ellenbrook Train Derailed". The article states —

Ellenbrook's train line —

Mr F.A. Alban: That is in my electorate. Is there anything happening in your electorate? I appreciate the publicity.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, if you want to speak you will have that opportunity.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You have come in, Duffy?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Nothing is happening in my electorate because the Liberal–National government is ignoring it. I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question. Apart from closing the police station and breaking a key election commitment, no, nothing else is happening in my electorate. I thank the member for Swan Hills for asking.

I come back to the article in *Windows on Ellenbrook* —

Ellenbrook's train line looks set to become a distant memory as the State Government backtracks on an election promise to build the railway line.

Member for Swan Hills Frank Alban MLA said he has not been told the rail line will not go ahead and he believes it will.

However, questions to the Transport Minister Simon O'Brien tell another story.

When asked when construction on the train line to Ellenbrook would begin, has the feasibility study been completed, and when would the contract be let, a spokesman for the Minister said there was no money.

The article quotes the spokesman for the minister as follows —

“The Government recognises that the whole north–east metropolitan corridor, including Ellenbrook, requires an improved level of public transport services to meet the needs of the community,” he said.

“A specific decision on public transport options for Ellenbrook will be made by the Government after it has considered the long term public transport strategy for Perth, which is scheduled for completion this year. This strategy will clearly define the demand for public transport over the next two decades and identify the investments needed to improve service levels and further develop the network.”

When it was pointed out his response didn't provide answers to any of the questions raised this was too demanding for the spokesman.

“I am sorry I cannot provide a response in line with your demands at this time.

Again, I come back to the age-old question: will the Ellenbrook train line be built; and, if so, what is the time frame? As I said it is a core election commitment and the people of Ellenbrook are expecting and are keen to see that rail line to their suburb and through the region. It is also a rail line that, given my preferred route, would also help service a large section of my electorate, including the suburb of Ballajura and north Beechboro.

Mr M.P. Whitely: Is that up Tonkin Highway?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My preferred route is to go up Tonkin Highway. Of course, that would also serve the electorates of the members for Bassendean and Morley.

Mr M.P. Whitely: And then on to Reid?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, on to Reid Highway.

Mr M.P. Whitely: And up Lord?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, up Lord Street and that would also help service the 33 000 new residents who are expected to move into the Lord Street corridor over the next decade. It is a key point that people are unaware of. We talk a lot about the urban growth in the northern suburbs and there has been a lot of talk about the urban growth in the electorates of the member for Mandurah and the member for Warnbro. Of course the north–east corridor is another area of massive growth. We have the ever-expanding Ellenbrook and we also have the possibility of 33 000 new residents moving into the Lord Street corridor over the next 10 years. This is an area that is not serviced very well by roads. Members would recognise that in the north–east corridor the roads are lagging behind the growth. Roads need to be improved, but, more importantly, public transport needs to be improved. Without public transport the cost and time issues experienced by people throughout the corridor, linking into the central business district and areas both east and west of the corridor, will be immense. It will be a huge impost on families living in that area if public transport is not improved.

As I said, currently public transport and roads are not up to scratch in the region. The need for public transport is an issue that is raised with me by the local community. When I have my street corner meetings people ask me what is happening to the Ellenbrook rail line and public transport in the area. It is up to this government to give us an indication about what is happening to the Ellenbrook rail line.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Have you been muzzled, Duffy?

Mr F.A. Alban: I have heard this speech before. Just send me a copy of it. I have heard it three times. I am waiting for you to talk about something new.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Duffy, I can't believe that the Leader of the House muzzled you.

The ACTING SPEAKER: And I cannot believe that the member for Mandurah is still talking. I call him to order.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I also call the member for Swan Hills to order.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The reason that I am making the same points is because nothing is happening. No railway is being built. The plans have not been released. I would like to know where the 20-year transport vision is. It was meant to be completed in April. I would like this government to release the 20-year transport vision. I would like to know why the money from the budget has disappeared.

During the estimates process I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport to give us an update on the project, so I could talk about new things. For example, has the alignment been done, have the cars been ordered, are the tracks being laid and is the station being worked on? I would like an update of the project. Then I can come into this Parliament and talk about how great it is that these things are happening. Obviously nothing is happening, so I cannot give an update to this Parliament on the Ellenbrook rail line.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Because nothing is happening. Again, I urge this government in considering this bill, which is the bill to build the rail line from Butler to Brighton, to let the public, particularly the people of Ellenbrook, know where their rail line is. What is the time frame? When can people expect to see their rail line? Because I think that does bring a bit of certainty to both businesses and people living in the community. They need to know when their rail line will be built. I am glad that the member for Swan Hills acknowledges that the Liberal government is doing nothing in the electorate of West Swan. I am glad that he acknowledges that in the northeast corridor the Liberal–National government is not doing a lot or is doing basically nothing.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 3962.]