

MAIN ROADS AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MRS J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI (Kingsley — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.53 pm]: As this is my third time attempting to finish this speech, I would like to say that there will be a grand finale in my third act, but I have only a few more comments to make! Prior to the interruption for parliamentary business, I was talking about the many projects that Main Roads Western Australia and the Minister for Transport have undertaken since our election in 2017. The fact is that these projects provide us with not only a way to get around our wonderful state, but also the capacity to use these new infrastructure assets as economic generators.

I briefly touched on the \$1.5 million that the state spent for a project at Wanneroo raceway, which I was very fortunate to attend with my revhead—not redhead—husband a couple of weekends ago. It was a great event and everyone there thoroughly enjoyed it —

Mr W.J. Johnston: I didn't see you!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: No, I didn't see you either, minister!

Mr W.J. Johnston: I actually did—I saw you sneaking around!

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: Right. As the minister would know, it was a great event. It was very well attended.

The WA Sporting Car Club, particularly its head, Russell, was very thankful to the state government for its investment. It not only provided a very smooth and easy to use lay-down area for the buses, but also widened part of Wattle Avenue East to allow for better accessibility to the venue. Supercars is one of those events that if you love it, you love it and want to go every year. That certainly enabled us to continue to hold the event this year. On behalf of the car club, I thank the Minister for Transport, the Premier and the Minister for Tourism for their cooperation and work on that particular project.

Another project that is close to my heart—although nowhere near my electorate—is the upgrades to Indian Ocean Drive. My parents live in Jurien Bay, so we are quite fortunate to be able to travel up there from time to time and travel around the region. I know that the \$44 million upgrades along Indian Ocean Drive between Jurien Bay and Brand Highway were very much welcomed. It is important for not just the safety of those travelling on the roads, but also the economic prosperity of the region.

The final project I wanted to talk about this afternoon is obviously the one that is right next to my electorate; that is, the widening of Mitchell Freeway. We have been very fortunate to receive a substantial amount of funding from the state and federal governments to widen the Mitchell Freeway southbound to three lanes between Hodges Drive and Hepburn Avenue. I know that I am not the only member of Parliament whom this benefits; the constituents of the members for Landsdale, Joondalup, Hillarys and Carine and then further north, the members for Burns Beach and Butler will also benefit from this. However, it is my constituents who are currently undergoing this project and it can be quite trying at times. I think everybody understands that going through roadworks, whether it is on the freeway or any other road—especially if it is taking some time—can be quite difficult. My constituents also have the added impact of the principal shared path being built alongside the freeway. It is going to be fantastic. I know that one of the minister's goals is to connect up all the missing links in our cyclepath network and I am very thankful that we will actually be able to provide this. However, unfortunately for my residents at the moment, it means that we have had to clear a lot of the trees along there. It can be quite a shock. I admit that I was shocked the first time I drove past. It can be quite confronting for people. In this public forum, I would like to put on record my thanks for the understanding of those residents. I know that it is having an impact on their lives at the moment. I can assure those residents that we are asking Main Roads to work as quickly as it can on this project.

I thought I would give a very brief update about what is happening because some people say, "There is nothing happening!" It looks like nothing is happening because everything that is happening at the moment is happening underground. The installation of the footings for the sound wall that will go up is currently being undertaken, particularly in Kingsley and Greenwood. There has to be 177 footings drilled to support the sound wall that will go up next to the principal shared path. The noise wall footings are required every four metres and are constructed using an auger—I am not sure I have said that right—which is basically a corkscrew drill. A hole is drilled and then filled with steel reinforced cages and concrete. This is obviously to support the sound wall that will have a lasting impact on the residents. Once all the footings have been completed, the installation of the posts and panels for the noise wall will commence very shortly. It is interesting to know—I did not realise this—that the installation of the footings is actually the part that takes the most time. The posts and panels are relatively quick to install compared with the footings. Work on the design of the wall and the principal shared paths has obviously been progressing, with changes being made to minimise the number of trees being removed. Services in this area will be relocated for the Smart Freeway project. This is really important as it means that when the Smart Freeway project is rolled

out, we will have no further disruptions. All the disruptions will occur at the same time. A lot of the on-ramps will be shut down from 7.00 pm to 5.00 am to allow those services to be relocated.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: I understand that this is a very trying time for my constituents. The minister and I certainly appreciate their understanding at this time. Once everything is finished, I am sure they will be much happier with the sound wall. We recently received an update on the offset planting. Because this project is in close proximity to Woodvale and Kingsley, the replanting will occur in Yellagonga Regional Park. Some of it has already occurred on Whitfords Avenue. It has been fenced in, which will stop the kangaroos from eating the plants because the trees establish themselves so they can provide an ongoing source of food for kangaroos in the future. Additional planting will be done around Duffy House, which is extremely exciting given that we know the City of Joondalup is progressing the next stage of the Duffy House redevelopment. I wanted to assure people that offset planting is occurring.

In addition, once construction work has been completed along the principal shared path and the sound wall, landscaping and replanting will be done where possible. I have learnt that the reason we plant tube stock or smaller plants is that they have a better survival rate. Their ability to grow a root system will sustain them after two years of watering. I assure residents that the project is absolutely on track, we are heading towards completion and we will be carrying out not only offset planting, but also landscaping planting once construction has been completed for this project.

I will quickly head back to the bill. Aside from all the projects we are working on, this bill will give Main Roads new powers to allow fees and charges to be applied—for example, for property developments, mining operations and infrastructure in the road reserve. That is pretty important in a large mining state. We require a decent number of roads to get around. Our capacity to apply fees or levies or other charges relating to roads will ensure that not only will we get the best possible roads, but we will also get the best possible outcomes for our constituents. Some of the things that could be entered into by Main Roads to maximise the commercial return is road and rail grade separations. Another of the minister's pet projects is to get rid of those rail and road crossings by separating roads and rail lines. Rail versus road is not a great idea. Haul road connections will be dedicated to heavy haulage. If anybody has driven up north, they would have seen the massive trucks, particularly if they have driven on the internal roads, not so much the coastal roads, though the trucks sometimes use those roads. Those trucks do a lot of damage to roads, just by their nature, not purposely. The government is also working on road maintenance contributions, subdivision connections and also pipelines for other services.

This bill is a really good futureproofing bill because it acknowledges that when the Main Roads Act was written 100 years ago, as I said when I started this speech three times ago, horses were the norm and cars were only for rich people. That gives members a bit of an idea of the time frame in which this bill was originally written. I acknowledge that it has been amended a couple of times since then. This amendment bill that we are considering will provide for some futureproofing by putting in pipelines, for example. We do not know what services we will need moving into the future.

The bill will also allow for Main Roads to use innovative forms of contract and business arrangements to maximise its commercial return. This is really smart because it uses an infrastructure asset that we need to create an additional revenue stream that we can use for the benefit of everyone in Western Australia. That could include public-private partnerships, separate entities and joint ventures. It will also streamline contract approval submissions to suit the different styles of contracts.

I commend the bill to the house and thank the minister for her vision and for being able to create a world in which we can build infrastructure that will service us not just for driving on but into the future, whatever that may hold.

MS L. DALTON (Geraldton) [3.06 pm]: I also rise today to speak on the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023. I am really pleased to see that our government is working to update this very old legislation to meet the expectations of modern road users and prepare for future development of our great state, including having the vision to be prepared for the rise of electric and/or hydrogen-powered vehicles. The existing act is 100 years old. Our state has progressed a lot in that time.

Back in the day, Main Roads' main remit was to just build roads. The old act is no longer fit for purpose as our community moves about via freeways and highways with complex intersections and powered traffic lights. The changes to the Main Road Act 1930 will unlock many opportunities for our communities to further benefit from the productivity and development of our state by utilising the \$55 billion road and bridge asset to create return through investigating opportunities for things such as retail, childcare facilities and eateries on under-utilised land. It is particularly exciting for people like me who live in the regions and have to travel long distances.

We have seen huge construction and labour constraints within the state but Main Roads has continued with a huge body of work across the state. I am really pleased to say that most of the projects in my electorate are completed

or progressing to the completion stage. The turning pocket into West Bank, which is on Brand Highway, is in progress. Works on the Barrett Drive–Brand Highway intersection have been completed, which was highlighted as a black spot, along with the Watterson Road and Brand Highway connection. Works on the Maitland Street and Cathedral Avenue roundabout are in progress. Construction of a roundabout at the T-intersection of Durlacher Street and Maitland Street is complete. That is really great considering that a lot of projects around the state have faced huge constraints but we have been able to push them. I would like to reiterate what the member for Kingsley said about the \$44 million upgrades to Indian Ocean Drive, including widening the road. Those upgrades are very welcome. As soon as I finish this speech, I will be getting in my car and heading straight back up to Geraldton on that road. It is absolutely fabulous. It is a lot more comforting and it feels a lot safer to travel on that road since it has been widened. I thank the minister for moving that project along.

I have a particular fondness for the Department of Main Roads. For 23 years, my dad worked for Main Roads in Geraldton. I am getting a little emotional because my dad was put into a nursing home this week. I did not think I would feel this way until I started to talk about him. He was a much-loved employee, though maybe not always by everyone, in the Main Roads department. He worked in the solar laboratory for most of those years. For the last few years, he worked in administration. His job was as a soil sampler but he used to tell us he was a soil scientist. As young children, we naturally believed him, and I used to go to school and tell everyone that my dad was a soil scientist. It was not until later years that I realised he was just embellishing the truth.

This job took him away from home for weeks at a time working on the roads between the towns of Meekatharra, Mt Magnet and Cue. We heard stories on his return of things we probably would not hear today, and the minister might vouch for this. The guys who used to work on those roads in those days would sleep in tents, swags or caravans on the side of the road. He would be out there collecting samples of soil to test. He would come home covered in dirt and sweat, and bring us gifts that he called snake eggs, but were actually, as I again worked out later, smooth river stones and rocks he had collected. I think members get the picture that my dad used to quite embellish the truth in those days. They were long hot days I am sure, but the friendships made then have been long lasting. I also have wonderful memories of social club events, with things like Christmas trees, that Main Roads held for families, which really created a sense of camaraderie between the groups of people who worked there. It was obviously really important because they were young men and older men working away from home for long stints. To have that sense of family that Main Roads created in those times when they were home was really important.

In regional Western Australia, Main Roads played a vital part in strengthening the social fabric and has been a constant employer in our towns. Improvements to the operations of Main Roads are not just in this piece of legislation. As we have already seen across the state, our communities have benefited from the monumental shift from subcontracting to bringing employees back in-house, like when my dad worked used to work for Main Roads. Over 600 employees will be brought back into the organisation, which will increase job security in regional Western Australia, especially with the development of four new regional offices and depots in Manjimup, Esperance, Karratha and Broome.

Alongside Minister Saffioti, I attended the opening of the new co-located Main Roads and Department of Transport office in Geraldton last year. Everyone there was really excited about the new facilities and co-location, although we had a little laugh about the fact that the laboratory was still in the same old building that it used to be back in the 1970s and 1980s. The wonderful new facilities were really welcome news.

This government's foresight and commitment to our communities, such as the in-house model of delivery, could save more than \$25 million a year, producing major economic benefits and increased employment opportunities for regional Western Australia, including increasing gross regional product by up to \$335 million over the next 10 years.

I spoke to a young Aboriginal man called Jarrad Oakley Nicholls who has a business called Oaks Civil Construction, and we were talking about how important that in-house work was and how progressive Main Roads is as an agency of government. A lot of people who work in that department can pass all that knowledge to apprentices and trainees who come up through the ranks. Even Jarrad, who has a contracting business, was very impressed with the progress Main Roads is making as a department.

In conclusion, by making these changes to the act, we are enabling Main Roads to enter into commercial agreements, subject to approval of the minister and Treasurer, to generate revenue through commercial leases and agreements with other road users, including infrastructure delivery for the mining, resources and logistics industries, and property developers. The Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023 prioritises reducing constraints, improving efficiency and following through on our commitment to building capacity in people and maximising our assets. I commend this bill to the house.

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [3.14 pm]: I thank the member for Geraldton. I was not expecting that. It was a wonderful contribution.

Ms L. Dalton interjected.

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: It just took us to a completely different space. In the brief time I have I am going to deviate a little away from the facts of the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023 as well. I think we can agree that the act needs modernisation. We are living in a fast-changing world, and our bills and acts need to keep up to speed, no pun intended, so we can continue to build on the incredible foundations we have made in infrastructure, transport and logistics since coming to government in 2017—how we move and how we live. I will talk about modernisation and opportunity, innovation and change, and community and place-making.

I will get on the record, straight up, some of the wonderful things that Main Roads has delivered in my community since I was elected as a member for Bicton in 2017. Locally in and near my electorate of Bicton we have seen many transport and related infrastructure projects successfully completed or commenced, both large and small, including the High Street upgrade, with its community-connecting underpasses and sound-limiting amenity walls. There have been pedestrian crossing upgrades along Canning Highway, extensions to the principal shared pathways, the progression of Westport, the Future of Fremantle project and the once-in-a-century replacement of the Fremantle Traffic Bridge, which is of course progressing.

The direction I want to go is to look into the future, although members will soon hear that the future is in some ways already here. I refer to an article written by Bernard Marr in January 2022 on *Forbes* online titled “The 3 Biggest Future Trends in Transportation and Mobility”. Mr Marr writes —

As a futurist, I see many industries undergoing enormous change. The transportation sector is a perfect example of an industry grappling with rapid changes in technology and customer expectations. In particular, these changes are being driven by three major trends: electrification, automation, and servitization.

... it's important to note that these three trends won't just transform the movement of people. How we move goods will also change. Therefore, the rapid advancements taking place in transportation will affect most businesses, regardless of sector—essentially, any business with a supply chain that relies on the movement of goods should be aware of these three trends.

The first one is electrification. We are all very familiar with the uptake of electric cars and vehicles, but it is quite exciting that electrification—maybe not in this country as yet, but in other countries—is going ahead not just with private vehicles but also with ridesharing companies like Ola. Norway has been running electric car ferries since 2015. Daimler's eCascadia is looking at trucks.

The second trend is autonomous connected vehicles. I have forgotten the name of the movie, but it featured a Johnny Cab, an automated taxi. It will come back to me later. Arnold Schwarzenegger was in it. Come on, somebody has to remember it.

Ms D.G. D'Anna: *Total Recall!*

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: Thank you—full marks to the member for Kimberley!

These sorts of automated vehicles are coming. Here they are still a little bit futuristic but there are driverless taxis. There is a company called Waymo, which is in Phoenix, Arizona and San Francisco and is rolling out in California. Electric taxis are well and truly on their way, if not already here. Waymo also has an autonomous truck fleet. I quote from the Waymo website —

Whether it's Europe, China, or here —

I am going to extrapolate and say here in WA —

in the United States, most goods that we use and rely on everyday get to their destination by truck. Around 70 percent of all freight moved in the United States travels by truck, making it the leading freight transportation mode. Add in smaller local deliveries to and from retail storefronts, and even your front door, and you can see why transportation logistics isn't just about moving things from point A to B. It's about keeping the world's economic engine running.

Waymo is already using an autonomous truck fleet. Servitisation is a massive trend that will affect almost all of us. In a nutshell, that is ridesharing. We will not need big old car parks in the future because we will dial a vehicle that will pick us up, take us to where we want to go and drop us back again—driverless, automated and electric. It is a pretty exciting concept.

Another opportunity of a modernised Main Roads Act—I feel very strongly about this—can be seen in place making and value creation. We are somewhat familiar with the concept of value capture, but it is also about place making. It is a little confusing at times and the term can be contradictory. It is simply the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play and learn in. In my experience with Main Roads over the years, I have seen the massive shift towards Main Roads not just building roads, but talking with people and working with

communities to understand how when building a road, the spaces can be captured to not only move people in and out, but also invigorate and make the most of the places where people may stop. That is a really exciting concept.

I am whipping through this. I really want to finish by giving a shout-out to Main Roads. It probably gets a lot of shouting at in our communities. Like other members when they had the opportunity to get on their feet, I take the opportunity to give Main Road a shout-out. When I was first elected in 2017, I worked closely with Main Roads' representatives and representatives from the minister's office on the rehabilitation of the Roe 8 site in the Beeliar wetlands. It was quite a traumatic time for many community members. I greatly valued the way the Main Roads' representatives at the time did not shy away from that conflict. They worked through it and we got to the point at which we came together and, at the very least, agreed on base principles that we could move forward on. That took quite a big shift, I think, in the way Main Roads approached that challenge.

In conclusion, the way we use our roads and transport systems is changing. By introducing the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023, the Minister for Transport will ensure that our road authority is ready. I congratulate the minister on her forward thinking and future-focused approach to her role. I commend the bill to the house.

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.23 pm]: It is a pleasure to talk on the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023 today at the peak time for giving a speech on a bill—straight after the budget on a Thursday afternoon! I will not take too long. I looked at the debate on the Main Roads Bill 1930 when the bill went through, so I have a bit of *Hansard* to read. Obviously, we are amending this bill, which has been amended many times. My grandfather was born in 1930 and in 1996, I was in year 11, which was when the last significant update to the legislation was made. I was looking at it earlier today and photocopying *Hansard* in the corridor. The Minister for Transport would be interested to know about some of the debate at the time between the Minister for Works, Mr Lindsay, who was the member for Mt Marshall, and, I think, a former minister who became a minister again, the Labor member for South Fremantle, Mr McCallum. I will not go through too much of the *Hansard* because it is Thursday afternoon, but one issue that came up was federal funding for roads and transport. I will quote from a few things that I found in the second reading debate. Interestingly, they did not go through the bill much. The minister started by saying that it had two principal objects. One object was the abolition of the Main Roads Board, which I think operated like the Perth Road Board and other local boards at the time that looked after the roads. The second principal object was the appointment of a commissioner in the board's place, which I think has continued since then. One of the main issues that came out in the debate was the overhead costs for road projects. The minister said that the Great Depression had hit in the lead-up to 1930 and that the state government had received a lot of federal funding to try to stimulate the economy and get people working from what was called the unemployment fund. A lot of money was spent in a couple of years. The minister said —

In order to spend that money, a very large staff was built up. I believe it was quite necessary under the conditions that existed in the past, but certainly it is not necessary under present conditions, nor is it likely to be necessary under the conditions which will prevail in the future.

The minister gave a cost of all the staff and incidental expenses. An opposition member asked what the incidentals for all the staff were for and the answer was that it was principally for motor cars. The department received a lot of money and the Main Roads Board increased its staff capacity. The Minister for Works, who was in charge of the Main Roads Board said that because we would not build many roads in the future, he would need to cut it all back, especially the overheads. There was a lot of discussion about overheads.

Another thing that came up was the federal funding. There seemed to be a barney between the state and the feds over the federal road funding. I will quote a quote! The minister read a letter from the Prime Minister, who I think was the Labor Prime Minister James Scullin. The letter from the Prime Minister to the states says —

Frankly I do not think the Commonwealth should have ever had any connection with road construction, and the Commonwealth Government is prepared to discuss freely with you the question whether we ought not now to come to an arrangement to review the Federal aid roads agreement, which imposes on the States obligations they are finding irksome.

“Irksome”—there is a word we do not hear often in a letter from the Prime Minister. I do not know the context of a lot of the debate, but there seems to have been a bit of a problem between the federal government and the state government. The Labor opposition member had been the Minister for Works and became a minister again once Labor won government a few years later after 1930. He talked about federal funding and said in the second reading debate —

But I cannot remember one instance in which the Minister for Works gave us any help. He did not hesitate to criticise, but he did not raise his voice to help us in our agitation to remove the restrictions so that the State Government might function freely in respect of the road programme as it is able to do to-day. Every time I was in the Eastern States I hammered away at this subject and if the Bruce–Page Government had remained in office, I have no doubt we should still be submitting to the conditions they imposed. There has been a great deal of road work done during the last few years and perhaps it has been more expensive than necessary because of the Commonwealth restrictions. Still, anyone travelling throughout the State

will admit that the roads from one end of Western Australia to the other have been considerably improved. Go where you will, to the far Kimberleys in the North down to the extreme south, there will be found the advantage of the work carried out by the Main Roads Board. In the Kimberleys—and the member for Kimberley ... can hear me out on this—it used to take weeks to travel from Hall's Creek to Wyndham. Now that trip can be done in about 30 hours. Right through the North West there were difficulties in crossing streams when the rivers were running, and people were hung up for weeks at a time. We have bridged those streams and the people up there, the pioneers, are getting the benefit of the work we carried out. From here to Bunbury the road has been improved so that the trip that occupied a day can now be done in a few hours.

It used to take a day. It continues —

From Perth to Albany, from Perth to Merredin and from Perth to Geraldton, in fact, wherever one goes, there will be found a marked improvement in the state of the roads.

Here we have another example of a Labor government even working with, I think it was a Nationalist Party government at the time, federally, to improve our state's roads. It did the deal, even though it was with a Nationalist government at the time. The Nationalist Party was a former branch of the Liberal Party. It was made up of the rats from the Billy Hughes's split from the Labor Party during World War I. But we worked with them. We got the roads. Then we had a new minister come in who brought in this act, and there was no opposition from the Labor Party. The bill has lasted this long and we are amending it today. That is some research that I did very quickly this afternoon. Do I have a couple more minutes, Whip? Yes.

Much like the Labor Party during the great depression, there are roads everywhere. There is nowhere people can go in Perth without being on the road. On my noticeboard up in my office, I have a pamphlet from the last election that I put out, which lists 100 achievements in Balcatta. I have circled all the transport ones, so I will go through them very quickly, and some achievements carrying over. We widened the Mitchell Freeway southbound from Cedric Street to Vincent Street. We widened the Mitchell Freeway northbound from Hutton Street to Cedric Street. One of those achievements includes a noise wall along the Princeton sub-development in Stirling. We realigned the principal shared path along the eastern side of the Mitchell Freeway. We built a new cycle and pedestrian bridge over Scarborough Beach Road along the Mitchell Freeway. It is a lovely bridge—we opened that one together, minister. It is a nice wide bridge over Scarborough Beach Road. We built the new cycling tunnel under Hutton Street. One of the most popular things that we ever did as a state government—it did not cost us too much money—was the roundabout at Boya Way and Erindale Road in Balcatta. People asked for this roundabout for years and the former government said that it would help fund it, but the City of Stirling wrote to the state government and never got a reply about whether the money was actually available. This minister made it available, we got it built, and the community is now much safer for it. We had some black spot funding for new roundabouts at Powell Street and Waterloo Street in Joondanna, and McDonald Street and Albert Street in Osborne Park.

I think the member for Bicton said earlier that sometimes Main Roads Western Australia gets a bit of criticism around the place. From someone who was in local government for 12 years, I had a bit of a love-hate relationship with Main Roads, but I have to say, it does work very well sometimes and it comes up with some solutions. One of the solutions that we trialled in my electorate, as well as the member for Perth's electorate, was the low-cost urban road safety program, which looked at crashes that can happen on minor roundabouts on local roads. The Main Roads people looked at these crash statistics and worked out that for the local roads that normally would not attract any funding from the state other than black spot funding, a little bit of money can go a long way to stopping crashes. We have had them in Joondanna. Minister, I will not go through many more of these achievements.

Obviously, other achievements happened that I am very proud of. We commenced the Stevenson Avenue extension, and phase 1 of that has occurred. For \$23 million, the City of Stirling delivered that project in the member for Scarborough's electorate. It will do a great thing for Innaloo. Hopefully, we will have some people living around Stirling station, and, more recently, a new bus bridge was added to that project from the Public Transport Authority.

Mr S.A. Millman: How many bus stops will there be, member?

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: It will double the number of buses that go in there. During peak hour, the PTA has not been able to get another bus into Stirling Station for I think almost a decade now. It cannot get as many buses in anymore, so this will double the capacity of buses coming in. There is good car parking there. Hopefully, people will not have to use their car and they can get a feeder bus straight in, dropping them right on the concourse.

The smart freeways project is rolling out. I was always sceptical about smart freeways, but everyone who lives south of the river says they work.

Ms R. Saffioti: So were we all!

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: They work for people. I think that that work is happening on the freeway now.

Minister, I was going to go for longer, but, given the time, if we are all happy—yes, the Whip is nodding at me—I want to say that in terms of transport projects in the state, I was lucky enough to drive up to Broome and back on our highways last year. I used to think, being a staff member during the Gallop–Carpenter government, that Minister MacTiernan had done a great job as the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. But some of the stuff that the Minister for Transport has going on now—obviously this is nothing to do with Metronet or anything else—and the changes through her stewardship of things in our capital city and our state is absolutely unbelievable.

I commend this bill to the house.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [3.34 pm] — in reply: I might retire now and leave on a high after some of the comments made today and over the past few days! I acknowledge the work of all the local members in trying to get that balance between delivering new road projects and the community concern about operations. Sometimes local members are caught in the middle, in a sense, of us delivering new works and community concerns. We strive to work collaboratively with the community, through local members, to try to address its concerns. If I look around, I know there has been many a discussion about many of the issues that have been raised, and we hope that through Main Roads Western Australia we work collaboratively. We will not always please everybody, but I want to commend the work of our local members in advocating for their communities. Road construction is always tricky. There always is an impact because we are making changes, and we continue to learn how to manage those changes more effectively and try to minimise disruption.

To the Main Roads teams—I do not know whether anyone is watching; they are probably all reading through the budget papers as we speak—they have a very, very good department. It is what I call an oldschool department in some ways in that it still has a very collaborative team spirit, which I think the member for Geraldton talked about. The team spirit in Main Roads is very strong. The workers are very proud of their organisation. I just have to go to its Christmas lunch to realise that everyone participates in the social club. It is a really good working environment. Throughout the regions, too, Main Roads has been able to continue to exist. We are bringing the jobs back in-house, which the member for Geraldton outlined. That will add to that comradery. Long-term maintenance contracts were in place, and I would walk into a Main Roads office and someone would be employed by a contractor and someone employed by Main Roads. It was very confusing, and any benefits of “contracting out” diminished over time. As a result it was costing us more to deliver what we were doing. Therefore, bringing the workers back in-house is the right thing to do. It is one of the best decisions we have made. I am very proud that people will be moving back into Main Roads into full-time permanent jobs. When I went down to Northam, I spoke to the first crew of workers who were coming back in-house. Some of them do not want to talk much but they said that they were very happy to come back in-house because it gives them certainty and it helps them with their identity. Therefore, I am very, very proud of that decision. Again, I thank all the Main Roads teams who work around the clock to deliver our excellent road network. We have the best road network in the nation, and that has been a standard not just under my stewardship, but has existed for a long time. The quality of our roads and new builds and the quality of the pavements that we keep is excellent.

A friend of mine went over to the US recently and sent me some videos of them driving along some roads in California. The level of asphalt there would not be accepted here in WA. Someone who had just moved back to the US wrote a letter to the editor commenting on the good quality of our roads. I know that there are always issues around the state, but, again, when I drive on roads in other parts of the nation, I realise that we have a very good level of road infrastructure.

I am pleased with all the support. I am pleased with the comments of the opposition. Obviously, the opposition members have asked that we do not go into consideration in detail today because they are examining the budget, and that is fair enough. Therefore, we will not be going into consideration in detail today, but we hope to get on to that as soon as we come back to the normal setting.

I want to respond to some comments from the member for Moore. Again, I acknowledge that he is going through his budget response, so he cannot be in the chamber. The member for Moore asked why there is no power along the lines of what existed in the 2015 bill regarding functions and powers to improve the safety of roads. This is implicit in the functions of Main Roads. In fact, Main Roads’ mission statement is —

To provide world class outcomes for the customer through a safe, reliable and sustainable road-based transport system.

We believe that we already have enough in the functions and operations of Main Roads to know that the safety of roads is of paramount importance.

The member for Moore asked how planning and Main Roads matters will be adjudicated when there is a difference in policies and assessments. Some concerns related to the example of a service station to be built on Main Roads land. It would go through a normal development application process, just as other things do now. For example, train stations and the public open space created under the elevated rail go through a development application process

through the local council. It will be a normal approvals process. Although they might both be government projects, it will not mean that they will be excluded from the development application process. Of course, there will be collaboration to ensure that projects are well designed.

The member for Moore asked whether the new powers in the act will affect the setting of rates under the bulk concessional loading scheme. Nothing in this bill will affect the rate because this is set by policy. Currently, the scheme is used for mining operations and bulk commodity transport, but, to date, it has not been applied to haulage in the agricultural sector. I think the member was suggesting that this be reviewed, and we can discuss that during consideration in detail.

The member asked about guarantees for landowners subject to compulsory acquisition. The compulsory acquisition process is something that is not used very often. It is normally by agreement, and both parties will have certain rights and responsibilities that will continue to apply in relation to compulsory acquisition issues.

The member for Moore asked what criteria will be used by Main Roads to assess the commercial benefits of new proposals. Once this bill passes, Main Roads will develop a suite of policies that take into account value for money and the best rate of return to support the use of commercial powers.

The member for Moore raised the recommendations from the Langoulant special inquiry. I think the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Moore, does not like Main Roads. I do not know what has happened in the past, but he seems to really not like this agency. I think he was alluding to the fact that he may believe that Main Roads should not exist, which is very different from what I believe. In relation to recommendations from the Langoulant special inquiry, it is important to note that we created the Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery, OMTID, which means that large complicated projects are delivered by the major projects team with representatives from the Public Transport Authority and Main Roads. Those projects, in a sense, are implemented with a whole-of-transport-portfolio concept. As a result, it is not Main Roads versus PTA; it is basically a coordinating group that helps deliver the projects from a whole-of-transport point of view.

I always remember the discussion and debate on the Forrest Highway. When it was first built, it had no rest stops, and then a major debate took place over many years. Two rest stops were built, and there was a massive issue about the merging lanes coming in and out because of safety requirements. I remember a lot of discussion about the extent of those lanes, the sites chosen and so forth. I want to try to prevent that. When we build these major beasts of infrastructure, at the time of building we will highlight where we believe the rest stops will be and probably build some of the early infrastructure for them. From a government point of view, if we retain ownership of the land as part of those works, we will get an ongoing lease and an ongoing return to help maintain those areas. I think it will be a win-win situation and will make a lot more sense than having private developer pitted against private developer about who gets in first and gets the rest stop. Sometimes that does not create very fair outcomes.

We also believe that this will help in the management of our heavy vehicle parking areas, which is one of the issues across the rest of the state. We are investing heavily in facilities and amenities for the trucking industry. We are currently halfway through rolling out more than \$50 million of new or upgraded rest areas. The rollout has been done in consultation with peak bodies, in particular, the Transport Workers' Union of Australia, the Livestock and Rural Transport Association and the Western Roads Federation. One issue is the ongoing management of those facilities—who owns them and maintains them. We believe that a better process of managing and maintaining them, and an understanding of their underlying ownership, will assist in maintaining them for truck drivers in the future. This is a very good thing to do.

We will also provide Main Roads with powers to enforce appropriate use of the road train assembly areas to try to prevent—I hate to say it—the grey nomads, because sometimes there is a bit of a clash between the grey nomads and the trucking industry. There is a bit of a clash as areas that were primarily targeted or developed for the trucking industry are sometimes used by others.

Another thing is electric vehicle charging. This bill will also facilitate more commercial opportunities to develop vehicle charging on the side of the road, working to ensure fairness and transparency in who can access them and who runs them.

This bill will create a number of new opportunities in how we manage the roads and the roadsides. Also, it will create systems to better, in a sense, fund and maintain our roads. As I said, particularly when it comes to commercial activity on the side of the road, it will make it very clear and simple and transparent about who owns the land and what type of arrangements can exist going forward.

I thank everyone for their support. This is a significant bill. Sorry; I should mention, too, that I will be moving an amendment in consideration in detail—it is on the notice paper—in relation to facilitating arrangements for the use of public roads. If the opposition wants any further information, I can brief them before we come back to discuss this, I think, in a few weeks' time.

I thank everyone very much for their contributions, and I commend the bill to the house.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave denied to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

House adjourned at 3.48 pm
