

PARRY STREET PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS — FREMANTLE

Grievance

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [9.35 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport. I thank the minister for taking my grievance. My grievance relates to complaints that I received regarding the closure of the Parry Street pedestrian overpass in Fremantle. For members not familiar with the area, this bridge crosses the Fremantle rail line and provides pedestrians with access to both Victoria Quay and the Fremantle Passenger Terminal. I understand that this footbridge was temporarily closed by the Public Transport Authority in July 2022 to manage known structural risks and allow for further structural investigation; however, to date, residents are yet to receive an update on the future plans for the footbridge, and whether it will be repaired, replaced or simply demolished. I believe the public needs to understand what plans are being put in place to repair the bridge and when those repairs are likely to be completed.

Following communication from a local resident concerned about the ongoing impact of the bridge closure on residents and visitors, I went to look at it. It appears that there has been good maintenance work of the structure either side of the rail line. The parts directly above the rail line do not appear to have been maintained for some time. I appreciate that there may be complexities working on the structure directly above the rail line due to possible interaction with trains; however, I am sure that clever people could work out a way of completing any required inspection and repairs without disrupting rail traffic. It would be good to know whether there are major structural issues or simply relatively superficial problems that could be repaired quickly.

The location of this footbridge being positioned directly across from the Fremantle Passenger Terminal in Victoria Quay makes it a very important access route for pedestrians in Fremantle, both local and tourists. Fremantle is an important cruise ship port. Cruising is one of the most popular and fastest growing sections of the tourism industry worldwide. As per the Transperth closure notice that was placed on a temporary gate at the start of the bridge, the nearest alternative crossings are 550 metres north or 640 metres south. This means that everyone who disembarks a cruise ship at the terminal and goes into Fremantle may have to walk, sometimes with heavy luggage, over half a kilometre to the nearest alternative crossing to get to Fremantle. The bridge serves locals and visitors to Fremantle alike by providing access across the Fremantle rail line to both Victoria Quay and the Fremantle Passenger Terminal. The bridge serves an area of Fremantle that has already seen significant residential development. I understand a number of future projects worth many millions of dollars will be developed, including a major hotel and residential and commercial developments along Beach Street. A direct crossing for pedestrians from the Parry Street overpass to Victoria Quay will become even more essential. Accordingly, I ask the minister to urge the Public Transport Authority to either repair or replace the Parry Street pedestrian overpass as a matter of urgency. It would be good to see the structure reopened in time for the surging cruise ship visitations that occur during spring and summer.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [9.38 am]: I thank the member for Cottesloe for his grievance. The Parry Street footbridge is a Public Transport Authority asset that is primarily used when a cruise ship is in port, but is also used at other times. Structural inspections carried out on the footbridge identify that major maintenance and repairs are required due to its age and deterioration. The bridge's maximum load rating was assessed as being 150 kilograms per square metre, which could be achieved by two people being next to one another or one person and some luggage.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. Cook: If you're coming off a cruise ship, I can imagine you would!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: You never know.

Due to immediate safety concerns raised by these inspections, the footbridge was closed by the Public Transport Authority in July 2022 with the agreement of the Fremantle Port Authority. In addition to structural concerns, the footbridge is noncompliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. A total bridge replacement would be needed to bring the bridge up to the required standards. A heritage impact assessment has also identified the footbridge, which was built in 1968, as having little or no heritage value within the Fremantle area. The PTA is assessing options to determine the immediate future of the bridge.

In consultation with key stakeholders, and in the interests of informing current and longer term planning, the PTA is undertaking a station precinct planning exercise to review the configuration of existing level crossings and plans for future bus station infrastructure, parking and pedestrian and cycling access. Work is currently underway in examining a potential alternative replacement crossing for the Parry Street footbridge to improve connectivity with the Fremantle town centre and enhance the arrival experience of cruise passengers. This work is considered necessary to ensure that the future placement of an alternative crossing point aligns with long-term planning for the area.

There are two alternative pedestrian crossing points to the overpass that provide access to Fremantle; one is at Fremantle station and the other is at the Beach Street–Peter Hughes Drive underpass. Importantly, to ensure that car-free access is maintained, the Victoria Quay Fremantle Passenger Terminal also runs a free shuttle bus to and from the Fremantle town on cruise days. The PTA will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that we resolve any connectivity issues. To date, this has included the Fremantle Passenger Terminal to ensure that cruise passengers are aware of the bridge’s closure, alternative places to cross and wayfinding signage.

I understand the concerns that the member outlined. The PTA is looking at alternatives and doing some planning in that respect. As part of the Victoria Quay activation work, we are also working to see how we can better connect Victoria Quay with the Fremantle town centre and the Bathers Beach area. Work has been undertaken. My view about Fremantle station more generally is that it is a bit hidden; we need far better wayfinding clarity and connections between Fremantle station, Victoria Quay and the Fremantle town centre. The local member, Simone McGurk, is very passionate about making sure that we have better connections. There are connections, but we need to show people where those connections are and improve that connectivity, and that includes, ideally, exactly what happens with Fremantle train station in its connectivity with a new overpass or underpass or another way. That work is underway. I understand the impact that closing a pedestrian overpass has on people and I apologise for that, but for safety reasons it had to be closed. We are looking at how to provide alternative access points.