

PUBLIC TRANSPORT — PATRONAGE

243. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment to make public transport more accessible.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the locally manufactured C-series railcars will boost capacity across our rail network while creating more local jobs?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house of the impact of this government's two-zone fare cap on WA's public transport patronage?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Thornlie for that question. Before I start, can I say happy ninetieth birthday to my Uncle Tony, who is in the gallery.

[Applause.]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My Uncle Tony worked for Westrail for over 40 years, so it is a great link into public transport. He has a hearing aid, but he does not ever turn it up, so hopefully he heard that. Thank you to Uncle Tony's family for being here today. It is a big milestone, so we are having another celebration on Saturday.

- (1)–(2) When it comes to trains, the Labor Party is the party of train and rail manufacturing. As has been outlined, we have started manufacturing trains in WA for the first time in 30 years. Our new C-series train is undergoing dynamic testing now along the Mandurah and Joondalup lines, and there has been some testing on the Thornlie line, too, member for Thornlie. From all reports, the testing is going well. The second train is currently at the Nowergup depot and set to begin dynamic testing in May. Most exciting, the third train, which will have all the internal components like passenger seating, will be ready in the middle of this year. We are on target to have these running on the public transport network for passengers by the end of this year. Of course, those trains will be bigger in the sense that there will be more internal capacity, so this will continue to support more and more people using our public transport system.

Importantly, our patronage numbers show that Western Australians have bounced back when it comes to patronage on our public transport system. We are now at 92 per cent of pre-COVID levels, but, importantly, when it comes to standard passengers, we are up to 99 per cent of pre-COVID levels. That is supported, of course, by the new rail line, but it generally shows how much we have recovered from those COVID numbers. It is the strongest recovery of the nation. The only numbers that continue to impact our patronage data are those for the tertiary, or university, sector, which continues to have an 85 per cent level compared with pre-COVID levels. They are very, very strong figures.

Importantly, we have also brought in the two-zone fare cap for Western Australians. When we look at the growth in the number of people using our network, we see that the strongest growth is coming from the outer suburbs. There has been a 13 per cent increase in passengers from Mandurah, which shows that the two-zone fare cap, which is delivering enormous savings to people in the outer suburbs, is encouraging more people back onto public transport. When we talk about the cost of living and how we can help families, it is measures like public transport and capping fares, which is delivering enormous savings to people in our outer suburbs.