

ELLENBROOK RAIL LINE

Motion

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [11.30 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council notes that, after many years of promises from the previous state government, the McGowan government has committed to providing a rail service to Ellenbrook.

This is very exciting. My contribution may not be as exciting, but the event definitely is. A media statement from Tuesday, 29 July 2003, states —

It's 20 years today that the Perth to Fremantle passenger rail line was re-opened.

The minister said in that statement —

... Labor had always recognised the important role public transport played in developing and strengthening local communities.

She went on to say —

“Labor is still committed to enhancing and upgrading our public transport system to meet the needs of all commuters and developing WA as a liveable dynamic and vibrant State.

“This is especially so with our plans to upgrade existing stations, as well as doubling our urban network with extensions to the Northern Suburbs Railway, the spur line to Thornlie and the Perth-to-Mandurah railway which becomes fully operational by the end of 2007.”

The minister at that time was Hon Alannah MacTiernan. The reason I wanted to read that —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Martin Pritchard has the call.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Thank you, Mr Acting President. I wanted to read that out because it is the precursor to my comment that Labor is the party that builds and supports rail in Western Australia—always has, always will. A number of commitments were the precursors to last week's announcement of the new Ellenbrook line. In 2008, the then Carpenter Labor government committed to building a rail line through Ellenbrook. That was shortly followed by a commitment by the Barnett government to do the same.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Barnett opposition, I think it was at the time.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: It was the Barnett opposition at the time, but it did win that particular election. Unfortunately, that commitment did not exist after the election; it fell by the wayside. We then had the 2013 election, during which the Barnett government promised Metro Area Express light rail from Ellenbrook to the city. Unfortunately, that commitment also went by the wayside after the Liberal Party won that election. In 2015, Premier Barnett indicated that he did not believe that the Ellenbrook line was needed until around 2050. During the 2017 election, the Labor opposition made a commitment that it would finally build a rail line through to Ellenbrook. As history shows, the constituents of Western Australia believed that Labor would fulfil that commitment, as well as other commitments it made, and the McGowan government was elected in 2017. We have been working diligently ever since to make sure that that commitment, along with many other commitments, are fulfilled. Last week, we heard the first announcement that the Ellenbrook line has been basically determined—it may be amended a bit here and there. The constituents of Western Australia and Ellenbrook can have confidence that that is going to occur.

Ellenbrook is an interesting suburb. Although it is not my constituency, I have driven through Ellenbrook on a number of occasions and it seems to go for miles. The history of Ellenbrook is that development of the suburb was commenced in 1992. Since that time, and particularly since the turn of the century, it has been identified as the fastest-growing area in Australia. It is predicted that 415 000 people will be living in Ellenbrook by 2031. Because of the alignment of the proposed rail line, there will also be growth in a couple of new suburbs called Brabham, Dayton and Bennett Springs. These suburbs are not actually that far away from Perth—as the crow flies, they are probably closer to Perth than where I live in Duncraig—certainly Bennett Springs and Dayton would be. Those two suburbs are near Beechboro, which is the suburb in which I grew up. At the time, I worked out that Beechboro was 13 or 14 kilometres from the CBD. As I said, this is an opportunity.

In terms of the alignment of the Ellenbrook line, and the stations, it will go from Ellenbrook along the new Lord Street through to Whiteman Park. There is a proposal to have a station at Bennett Springs East, and there will be stations at Malaga, Noranda and Morley. The rail line will join the Midland line at Bayswater and continue into the city. The proposed travel times are quite interesting. From Ellenbrook, the estimated travel time to of Perth —

Several members interjected.

Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Colin Holt; Acting President; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Samantha Rowe; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Darren West

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members! There are a whole pile of conversations happening around the contribution of Hon Martin Pritchard, and I am struggling to hear his contribution. If members want to have a conversation before they make a contribution to the debate, can they please take it outside. Hon Martin Pritchard has the call.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Thank you, Mr Acting President. I was not paying attention to any of the other discussions in the chamber; I was directing my comments to you.

The travel time from Ellenbrook to Perth is likely to be around the 30-minute mark; from Whiteman Park, it will be 25 minutes; from Malaga, 21 minutes; from Noranda, 18 minutes; and from Morley, 15 minutes. As I mentioned before, I lived in Beechboro and I used to travel to Perth. This was during the time that I was working at Aherns. Because I was not driving at that time, I would catch a bus to Morley. I would then catch a bus—I think it was the number 62 bus, which was a special bus—from Morley, down Beaufort Street and all the way into town. The trip down Beaufort Street was not too bad, but the trip from Beechboro to Morley was excruciating because it travelled through all the suburbs to get there and it seemed to take forever. The ability for people in Beechboro in the not-too-distant future to jump on a train line and get into the city in 18 minutes is quite exciting. I wish that I had had the opportunity to take advantage of that back then. Even if the opposition had kept its commitments or promises, it would have been well and truly after I left Beechboro. The other interesting thing about Beechboro is that it was a quite rural area when I was living there, so the blocks were exceptionally large. I am not sure whether they were quite a quarter of an acre, but they were large.

I think there is a lot of opportunity to increase the density of housing in that particular area, and probably others. When we consider how far it is from the city centre, that would be a good thing. Those on that line get the opportunity of travelling through to not only Perth, but also Midland and the airport when that link is finally done. I think that is very, very progressive and very good news for the people in that area. They can believe it will happen because, as I mentioned before, Labor is the party that builds and supports rail in Western Australia—always has; always will.

The issue of credit obviously goes around. I am not so interested in that, but with all the things that I have heard since the announcement, makes me turn my mind to who should take the credit for getting us back on rail, if you will pardon the pun.

Several members interjected.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Who should take the credit for getting us back on rail? Well, the McGowan government came to power in 2017, a mere two years ago. During that time, it has been very busy righting the ship on many fronts. This is not an exception.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): Members, we did quieten down for a little while but we have now gone back into our intervening debate. Hon Martin Pritchard will be heard in relative silence for his remaining four minutes and 25 seconds.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Sorry; again, I was not paying any attention to the slight rumbles in the chamber. I was directing my comments to you, Mr Acting President, and I will continue to do so.

After a mere two years, we have managed to get this back on track. It is not a MAX light rail. It is not going to occur in 2050. It will occur in the foreseeable future. I would also like to give a shout-out to the federal government for supporting good management in the state and providing funding. The federal government has proposed to contribute \$500 million to this project. What a good decision of the federal government.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, I do not expect to have to remind you for a third time. Members on both sides are enjoying some interactions, but it makes it very difficult to hear the member on his feet.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Some may say that is a good thing, but I do not think you would share that view. The federal government has announced that it will come to the party and contribute \$500 million. The McGowan government has to take credit and should take credit for the fact that it is trusted by the federal government to spend this money wisely and to invest in projects that it also believes in. The McGowan government has managed to convince it, on numerous occasions now, to make contributions to this state. That is not only a one-way thing. The federal government deserves some credit. It hurts me to say so but it does deserve some credit. The McGowan government deserves more credit for being able to achieve what it has achieved and to convince the probably not-so-friendly federal government that it is the party that can provide the best leadership in this state financially, in infrastructure provision and in many other ways.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You might recall that they claimed that MAX light rail was going to be funded by the federal government. Were they ever able to get federal funding government for MAX rail?

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Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: Mr Acting President, that might be a good question. As I am directing my conversation to you, I could hardly —

The ACTING PRESIDENT: I suggest you continue to direct your remarks to the Chair.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: The issue I have with the previous government is that it made a commitment on a number of occasions that it would do something. Did it have the money to do it? Yes. It had the money. It had plenty of money coming in from royalties. It had this dubious scheme about trying not to pay back GST so it was rolling in money. In essence, it made commitments, broke those commitments after each election in which it was elected, and it is not because it did not have the money. The McGowan government could very easily claim that it does not have the money. It does not. It has gone studiously about fulfilling every one of its election promises and this is one of them.

I have mentioned that I was not agreeable with some of the previous government's infrastructure projects when I was in opposition, but I have changed my mind about some of them, including Optus Stadium. It is indeed a great success. If anyone suggested to me that we could either have a line to Ellenbrook and fulfil an election promise or we could build Elizabeth Quay, I know which one I would take—a line to Ellenbrook every time, because Labor is the party that builds rail in this state. It supports rail. It supports that infrastructure. It always has and always will.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Hon Alanna Clohesy, are you giving the official response on behalf of the government? Before we proceed, it has been my tradition that the official response by the government takes precedence over the responses of other members. If you are giving the official response, I accept that and the precedence is then removed; otherwise, I will move on to an alternative member. Are you giving the official response?

Hon Alanna Clohesy: No.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: In that case, I give the call to Hon Simon O'Brien.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [11.45 am]: The opposition is quite happy to recognise Hon Martin Pritchard's motion. Yes, we can note that there have been many years of promises and undertakings from previous state governments—plural—and indeed we note that the McGowan government is committed to providing a rail service to Ellenbrook. We can agree with that, because it is a simple matter of fact. In fact, this is not the first time that the Labor Party has committed to a railway line to Ellenbrook, as we have been reminded. I will come back to that in a moment.

The history of the Ellenbrook rail line is quite interesting. It is interesting from my point of view because I have had a bit to do with the transport portfolio over the years, though a lot of it was a long time ago now. Our friend opposite, the Minister for Agriculture and Food and ports and things, also has had a bit to do in this area. I am delighted that she is here today to add her particular flavour to the debate, which she no doubt will in due course. For those members who were not around at the time of the 2008 election, I know it is confusing. There should have been a 2009 election, but there was a 2008 election called by then Premier Carpenter without consulting any of his colleagues —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Do you remember the December 1996 election? That was a December election.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That was a very good election—that 1996 election. I was elected for the first time at that election. It was a watershed year.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Can you remember back that far?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Only my short-term memory is on the blink.

Everyone was a bit taken aback when this happened. We can imagine the then state president of the ALP would have been appalled to find this had been done, but, unfortunately, she is away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business now. That was a remarkable election in all the circumstances. One of the enduring memories for me is the undertaking, given out of the blue, by Premier Carpenter to build a rail line to Ellenbrook, which just happened to be in a then marginal seat that one of our former colleagues Hon Graham Giffard was running for.

I remember the television footage in Ellenbrook at that time. While Alan Carpenter was talking to the cameras, we could see Graham Giffard in the background. He was very industrious. Instead of being just a nodding dog, Graham Giffard was studiously banging in a post for a sign that said, "This is the future Ellenbrook rail station." I enjoyed it. Unfortunately for Graham Giffard, it did not get any further than that. The Carpenter government was committed to building the Ellenbrook rail line. There were other nodding dogs and other hangers-on. However, what struck me is that there was one conspicuous absentee. On that wonderful occasion, the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, was nowhere to be seen. She would normally have been the figurehead for those sorts of announcements, but she was nowhere to be seen. Why? Perhaps she had received

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the same advice from the then head of the Public Transport Authority, Reece Waldoock—a fine public servant—that I, as the incoming Minister for Transport, was about to receive. That advice was, “Minister, the Ellenbrook rail line cannot fly. It should not be a priority. The whole project is a dog.” Perhaps Hon Alannah MacTiernan will recall Reece Waldoock using the expression to her, “This project is a dog.” Whenever a project was proposed to be done, Reece Waldoock would use the expression, “This project is a dog.”

In those hectic days, I was instructed by the new Premier, as part of the incoming government, that we would match the Carpenter government’s promise, at least to the extent of conducting a serious investigation into building the Ellenbrook rail line. The exact terms of how we would match that promise are a bit confused in the memory of various people. I therefore commissioned the Public Transport Authority to see whether a business case could be built for the Ellenbrook rail line. A responsible government that wants to enter into a contract such as that needs to weigh up a lot of considerations. I think all members would know from either experience, or intuitively, that a responsible government would examine the requirements of the proposed project; that is, whether it will be cost-effective and, most importantly, whether it will have the money to do it. With the limited amount of money that governments always have, there may be higher priority projects that should be funded. Invariably, governments need to cut their cloth according to how much money is available and enter into projects without incurring excessive debt and so on. Guess what happened? We discovered that no work had been done on this project—nothing. It was just an announcement made out of thin air. No wonder Hon Alannah MacTiernan was nowhere to be seen and was never interviewed about this project. She knew it was a leap of faith. She knew it was going too far. No-one knew what the cost would be. No work had been done on this project. There was no justification for this project, apart from a promise that had been made by someone in a marginal seat and in desperate circumstances.

That is how this project was initiated. Since that time, there has been all sorts of controversy about this project. The Ellenbrook rail line was ultimately included as part of the former government’s transport plan, which noted that there would be sufficient demand for a rail line to Ellenbrook once Perth’s population reached 3.5 million. We accepted the advice of all the experts, in both financial and public transport matters, that the state government could not afford to build and service the Ellenbrook rail line without significantly increasing state debt and recurrent costs—something that we hear a lot about in this place. Financial contributions to this project have been made as governments have come and gone. The \$500 million pledged by the then Turnbull government to build the Ellenbrook rail line is welcome, because it makes it more doable.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I do not want to have any interjections, because I have very limited time.

That financial contribution from the federal government will ensure that the project will be viable, because it will reduce the capital contribution from the state government. That is a game changer. We look forward to that money coming in. We thank people like Hon Christian Porter, the federal member for Pearce, who has been vigorous and very successful in making representations to successive federal Treasurers.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Simon O'Brien has the call.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: That can be contrasted with former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and former Treasurer Wayne Swan, who came to Western Australia in 2007 and promised a \$2 billion WA infrastructure fund. We never saw any of that. The commitment from the Turnbull and Morrison governments to fund Western Australia is very welcome, and I am glad that was acknowledged so warmly by the mover of this motion.

In February 2017, the Labor Party released a media statement to highlight that, if elected to government, it would build this railway. However, the McGowan Labor government’s first three budgets contained no specific funding for this project. In August this year, the government announced that a tender would be awarded sometime next year, for construction to begin sometime after that. We look forward, as Her Majesty’s loyal opposition, to monitoring the government’s progress towards the completion of this project. We agree that it will be of great benefit to the people of Ellenbrook, and good luck to them.

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.56 am]: I thank Hon Martin Pritchard for bringing this motion to this place. Upgrading and developing new rail infrastructure and investing in public transport is very close to my heart. In my first speech in this Parliament I talked about the need for, and importance of, a rail line to Ellenbrook. I have advocated for public transport throughout my working life. It is fantastic that we now have the go-ahead for a rail line to Ellenbrook. This motion is important—it is about celebrating that fact. Public transport is the heartbeat of a strong and vibrant community. A good and accessible public transport system is central to bringing our communities together. That is one of the reasons I support a rail line to Ellenbrook. We all know that public transport connects communities. It improves the quality of life of all

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citizens. That is why it is disappointing that the people of Ellenbrook have had to wait until now to get their rail line. As we heard from Hon Martin Pritchard, only Labor delivers on public transport. Labor has a great record on public transport, and, in particular, on delivering rail infrastructure.

Stage 1 of the Metronet project will include about 70 kilometres of new passenger rail, and about 18 new railway stations.

Point of Order

Hon COLIN HOLT: Mr Acting President, I am wondering whether the parliamentary secretary is giving the official government response.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): We have had that discussion; at the time you may have been out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. At this point, no official government response speaker has been identified. Hon Alanna Clohesy has sought the call, as may every other member in the chamber.

Debate Resumed

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Just so that the honourable member will know, I did that in order to allow other members to participate in the debate.

Hon Colin Holt interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Hon Colin Holt is very welcome. I look forward to hearing his contribution.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Hon Colin Holt, in private members' business, no additional time is available to a government minister. The minister who gives the official government response is given the same time as every other speaker. Only the mover of the motion is given additional time.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you, Mr Acting President.

Metronet stage 1 will create 18 new railway stations. It will bring investment in housing, jobs and services. We will deliver this because Labor has a great track record when it comes to —

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you very much. Bring it all in.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: We shall not bring it all in, thank you. Hon Alanna Clohesy, if you could direct your comments to the Chair and not the chamber.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you, Mr Acting President.

Let us look at our track record for rail. Labor reopened the Fremantle railway line when it was closed by the Liberal–National government in 1979. Can we imagine Perth without the Fremantle rail line? We built the Perth–Currambine line and extended it to Joondalup and then to Clarkson. We built new stations and I am proud to say that many of them are in the East Metropolitan Region—the mighty East Metropolitan Region: Armadale, Bassendean, Gosnells, Greenwood, Kelmscott and Victoria Park. The woman right next to me personally built the Perth–Mandurah rail line.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Of course, we are very proud of that achievement, as we were proud of the minister at the time. We now have 70 kilometres of track to lay and we are getting on with the job. In contrast, might I say, the previous Liberal–National government laid just 15.5 kilometres of track in 8.5 years. In fact —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I don't think they even did that much.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you, minister. I did some calculation.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I think they only did seven.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: No; it is 15.5 kilometres. I am being generous, but that government closed about 500 kilometres of track on the tier 3 rail line. It opened minus 484.5 kilometres of track. The Liberal–National government's record is minus over the previous eight and a half years—minus 484.5 kilometres of track. That government could not get on with the job because it was not really committed to public transport, particularly rail.

Let us look at the saga of Ellenbrook rail. In 2008, the Liberal and National Parties first promised it. They came out—the honourable member has firsthand knowledge of that time—and supported a new Ellenbrook rail line. They offered \$53 million over four years in the 2008 election. The member for Swan Hills at the time, Frank Alban, sent around details to electors.

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The ACTING PRESIDENT: Honourable members, there is still far too much conversation happening around the chamber at a volume that makes it difficult. If you do need to have a conversation, take it outside.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you, Mr Acting President. Frank Alban sent out details to Swan Hills electors and \$53 million was promised for that line. However, as we heard from the honourable member opposite, it never happened, even though the Libs matched Labor's promise to build a line to Ellenbrook. Fast-forward to 2013 and the Premier at the time, Hon Colin Barnett, denied making that commitment to the people of Ellenbrook. He said it was never made. The poor people of Ellenbrook were promised instead a rapid bus transit system. That was never going to be a match for a rail line in the first instance, but, quite frankly, what a very silly idea. The government spent close to three-quarters of a million dollars on a graphic design of a rapid bus transit system. There were pictures to show what it would look like. We know what a rapid bus transit system looks like. The alignment offered was not well thought out, which is perhaps a polite way to put it. The then member for Swan Hills and the then Minister for Transport told the people of Ellenbrook that they would not get a rail line; it was not a priority and they had to focus on jobs first. How absolutely short-sighted was that? We know that rail creates jobs in not only construction or even in the operation of rail. Investment in rail brings significant economic benefits to the community. Every direct job in public transport rail is linked to four other jobs in the economy. How short-sighted was it to not even consider that rail brings jobs?

Part of the problem was that despite this broken promise to the people of Ellenbrook, there was not really any significant plan for public transport in Perth by the previous Liberal–National government. They took an ad hoc approach to closing rail and did not consider the future of the East Metropolitan Region and its public transport needs in particular. In fact, there was a plan to have a plan. There was a plan and that was to have a plan, but there was nothing else. The previous government then told the people of Ellenbrook that they would have a railway line. It backflipped by saying that there would be a railway line—but wait for it—they would have it in 30 years when the population will have increased 400 per cent from 2006. It was short-sighted.

In contrast, this government has done the planning. We have asked the people what they want and how they would use public transport. We have transformed that into a public transport plan called Metronet. It is not just a railway line, as if that was not enough. As we heard from the honourable member, five new stations will be built, apart from the Ellenbrook station—Whiteman Park, Bennett Springs, Malaga, Noranda and, of course, Morley—not to mention the upgrade to Bayswater station, which I am particularly looking forward to. We are planning ahead for a new station at Bennett Springs. Metronet will connect communities from Morley to Ellenbrook. People will have a choice to travel to the city, to the airport or to Ellenbrook. We know that international evidence shows that creating thousands of jobs is achievable with this, and that it is important, particularly when there is a commitment to build local and buy local. That is what our government is doing—East Metro, best metro.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [12.07 pm]: I rise because I want to say a few words as a member of a party that is a staunch supporter of public transport and as a former member of the East Metropolitan Region. The nature of Ellenbrook is that it is a classic example of a suburb that perhaps should have had more thought put into it when it was first created. We are now dealing with the need to retrospectively put in some of the most basic services for a growing part of the Perth metropolitan area.

From day one, Ellenbrook has been pretty much isolated from health services, employment services and a range of other things. I note from the outset that the low density of the development and its isolation combined to make it unfeasible for multiple governments to deliver those services. However, as has already been said, tens of thousands of people are living in the Ellenbrook area now and tens of thousands more are expected. It is growing to be a genuine secondary centre within Perth and that corridor between Ellenbrook and Morley is steadily filling with more low-density urban sprawl. Given the area also tends to be subject to mortgage stress, it is absolutely essential that those residents and the residents to come—young people in particular—have transport options to make sure they can access those education and employment opportunities that are not currently available locally.

More widely, we need to get more cars off our roads, as a carbon emissions reduction measure, because climate change is real. We are spending hundreds of millions of dollars every few years on making our roads wider, and then wider again, trying to deal with the issues of congestion, particularly as Perth continues to grow. Investing that money in public transport will ultimately bring manifold benefits to our communities, public health and climate, while also managing to address that congestion issue.

I remind members that Metronet, of which the Greens are very supportive, is strongly reminiscent of the top layer of the Greens' transit city plan, which also looked at light rail and bus routes and frequencies. This was established before Metronet was created. The Greens' work on this was principally driven by former Senator Scott Ludlam. It was a great plan, and I am not surprised that Metronet has such a strong resemblance to elements of it. Metronet could continue to go much further in ensuring that public transport is a viable option for all residents of Perth. Stranding the people of Ellenbrook in the middle of nowhere for the last 30 years has been an unfortunate example

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of quite myopic planning. It is beyond time that a genuine public transport option is made available, and Metronet is a great start. I look forward to the opportunities for creative and innovative infill that this will provide to the centres and the suburbs that it will ultimately pass through.

HON SAMANTHA ROWE (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.11 pm]: I begin by congratulating my colleague Hon Martin Pritchard for moving this motion this morning —

That the Legislative Council notes that, after many years of promises from the previous state government, the McGowan government has committed to providing a rail service to Ellenbrook.

This is a great news story. As a member representing the East Metropolitan Region, I am very happy to see this happen, and I am sure that my colleagues around the chamber who represent the East Metropolitan Region would agree that this is a great outcome for the residents of Ellenbrook.

Hon Alanna Clohesy: Hear, hear!

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I have one supporter from east metro!

The rail line to Ellenbrook is a signature part of our Metronet project. We made the commitment to build it, and now we are going to deliver on it. The rail line project will allow us to deliver a world-class public transport network to not only the good people of Ellenbrook but also that north-eastern corridor, and the suburbs that make it up. We are not the only ones who think that this is a good idea and exciting news for Ellenbrook. I will read from an article published in *The Sunday Times* of 11 August —

Stockland WA general manager residential Col Dutton yesterday described the new line as a “game changer” for communities like Stockland’s Whiteman Edge and Vale “and all of the north-east growth corridor”.

“The announcement, coupled with the recent completion of the NorthLink WA road project to Ellenbrook, will cut commuter times considerably for both road and rail journeys, fully integrating suburbs like Aveley and Brabham into the Perth transport network for the first time,” he said.

This week, as *The Sunday Times* visited Ellenbrook, the train line buzz was obvious.

Ellenbrook real estate agent Mark Snelson said residents were buoyed by the “concrete steps” taken in terms of planning and acquisition.

Andrea Austin built a house in Ellenbrook 11 years ago, and said the train line had been “on everyone’s mind”.

“We are on the doorstep of the Swan Valley. It’s fresh air out here. But the question has always been ‘when is the train line coming?’,” she said.

Gemma Ben-Ary, executive director of the Ellenbrook Cultural Foundation, said a new line would not just benefit locals but make Ellenbrook and the surrounding areas a more attractive destination for visitors.

“There is a buzz. It just feels like there is so much potential. Every day it gets more exciting to be in Ellenbrook,” she said.

But it’s not just Ellenbrook that’s waiting for the trains to roll in. And it’s not just Ellenbrook which will benefit when the line is built, according to Mr Hegney. It could also be the rebirth of areas like Ballajura and Malaga, he said.

Bayswater—where not only will the line to Ellenbrook begin but the line to the airport will also branch off—would also be a big winner. “Don’t underestimate the positive effect in Bayswater,” Mr Hegney said.

“You’ll have a multiplier effect in Bayswater where you have the Forrestfield line coming in.

“Bayswater will all of a sudden have three networks coming in. “Bayswater is a big winner out of this as well. And the line also has the scope to transform Malaga from what is a modern industrial area to the possibility of a business centre as well ... Malaga could be a significant place of work and that would have a direct rub off in surrounding areas like Ballajura.”

Morley real-estate agent Jason Whiteman predicted Morley would become a shopping destination for outlying residents. “It will give residents in Ellenbrook, Aveley, Brabham and the like easier access to a regional hub,” he said.

“Overnight, Myer (at Galleria in Morley) will become very close to these locations.”

Urban Development Institute of Australia WA chief executive Tanya Steinbeck said new stations at Noranda, Morley and Bayswater would “increase the viability of mixed-use and higher density developments in those areas to provide a range of housing choices”.

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Ms Saffioti said the line would also “open up new development areas along the way, creating well-connected new communities around station precincts”.

As members have heard, this project is definitely not just wanted by Ellenbrook residents or the state government; it will hopefully connect the residents of those north-eastern suburbs to a rail network that will better service our communities in Western Australia. It will bring greater opportunities for access to education, recreation centres, job opportunities and the like, and that can only be a positive for this state. It will also help ease congestion on our roads. That is a big issue for many Perth commuters.

I am very pleased to see, after a lot of hard work and perseverance by our Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, this project starting to come to life. It is something that she most definitely should be congratulated for. It has been a lot of work, starting from scratch in the planning phase. After short-listing and detailed consideration of more than 100 possible options, the new Ellenbrook rail line will travel from Ellenbrook’s growing town centre, down the western side of the new Lord Street, through land north of Marshall Road, and then finally down the middle of Tonkin Highway, connecting at Bayswater Station on the Midland line. As I understand it, Metronet will be committed to minimising and offsetting environmental impacts, particularly around Whiteman Park. That will give some certainty to all of us who care about flora and fauna impacts.

Hon Donna Faragher: Are you going to allow residential development, though?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: We will have to wait and see. I do not have the answers, honourable member. We are committed to making sure that we take those very seriously. I am sure it will be considered in due course.

The rail line will almost halve the current travel time for Ellenbrook commuters travelling to the CBD by public transport. That will have a huge impact on individuals’ lives. The amount of time people have to spend getting to and from work has an impact on their family and personal life, and if we can halve commuter times, that will be a great thing for people travelling from Ellenbrook. Once this rail project is complete, the north-eastern suburbs will finally be connected to Perth’s rail network. As I said, this will undoubtedly create opportunities. This is a positive result for not only Ellenbrook but also the north-eastern corridor of suburbs. I congratulate the minister on this project and Hon Martin Pritchard for bringing it to the Council’s attention.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [12.19 pm]: I will make this brief because many people want to make a contribution. I find it very disappointing when a good member like Hon Martin Pritchard is used—I see it as an us-and-them situation. It is disappointing when transport in this state is used as a political football. Overall, Metronet is a good plan and I hope it goes ahead because it will be great for the Western Australian public. I find it disappointing, though, when one side of Parliament uses transport as a political issue.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Steve Thomas): Order, members!

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: There is no doubt the Labor Party has a better record when it comes to rail. We have seen the history in that regard and we accept that. However, I think that private members’ time could be better spent. The motion states —

That the Legislative Council notes that, after many years of promises from the previous state government —
That is the negative —

the McGowan government has committed to providing a rail service to Ellenbrook.

I understand why members from the eastern suburbs are very happy to have this rail line out to Ellenbrook. It is a good thing and I am very happy about that. But I do not like the issue of transport being used as a political football in this house or the other place. All Western Australians need transport and for many years they have been aware of how difficult it is to get around Perth. Transport services need to improve, but they should be seen as something for all Western Australians. The premise of this private members’ motion is wrong.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.22 pm]: I will be brief as well because I know that other people want to make a contribution. For the benefit of members of the Liberal Party and Nationals WA and, obviously, One Nation, I like to be helpful when I can. What I am going to do for them, because clearly there needs to be some education, is to explain exactly where and what Ellenbrook is. Ellenbrook is a north-eastern suburb in Perth, Western Australia. It lies 21 kilometres from the Perth CBD.

Hon Colin Tincknell: Have you ever been there?

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Hon DARREN WEST: It is interesting that the member should ask that because my family's ties to that area go back to the 1850s. The de Burgh and Marshall families have been in that area since the 1850s, so, in fact, I do have very strong —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! We have been reasonably well behaved in this debate and it will not degenerate in the final five minutes. If Hon Darren West can direct his remarks to the Chair and not take interjections, we will get to the point at which we can finish this in a reasonable manner. Hon Darren West has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: For the benefit of the crossbench and the opposition, I am explaining where Ellenbrook is and the importance of this very fine motion brought to us today by Hon Martin Pritchard. This is a case of *deja vu*. During the Carpenter and Gallop governments, the Mandurah line was rolled out by this very fine minister who we have in this house today. The misunderstanding of its importance back then by the opposition very much plays into this narrative that the Labor Party is about rail and the opposition is not. I will give the members some statistics about Ellenbrook. Incidentally, my family history goes back to the 1850s through the Marshall and de Burgh families. I do know a little bit about the area and have many relatives still living in that part of the world.

Ellenbrook is not far outside the Agricultural Region and it is a very important community. It is represented fabulously by Jessica Shaw, the member for Swan Hills, a very talented and wonderful member of Parliament who has done some great things in that community. Ellenbrook is an unusual community in that it is quite remote from its neighbouring suburbs. Members can find this information on Wikipedia—that is where I found this information; it is not hard to find. It states —

Given this relative isolation and the distance from the CBD, Ellenbrook has been designed and developed as a self-sustainable community. At ... 2015 the estimated urban population for Ellenbrook and surrounds was 41,681.

That is a significant population. Apparently, the population is set to expand to around 44 000 by 2021, with an eventual population of around 80 000. It is not hard to see why a community of that size in relative isolation should really be connected to the rest of the city. It is a no-brainer. The point of the motion is that for many years this community has been given false hope. The Barnett government lived on providing false hope for a quick vote, and then let down the community. I encourage members of the crossbench to go to Ellenbrook and to ask its local residents what they think about not being worthy of a railway line. We think they are worthy of a railway line and we are finally building a railway line to Ellenbrook after all the false hope and promises. According to the information that I have, house prices in Ellenbrook have dropped by 8.2 per cent in the last 12 months. That community has taken a fair old hit while waiting for this rail line. Finally, all those good people who have invested their hard-earned money into a house and land in Ellenbrook will see light at the end of the tunnel. The days of declining property prices will end in not just Ellenbrook, but also Brabham and Dayton, which have seen a drop in property prices of 2.6 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively. Bennett Springs has been fortunate enough to break-even over the last 12 months. We are about those people who have chosen to set up their family home and live in that great suburb of Ellenbrook. We think that they should be entitled to have a 30-minute run into the city instead of an hour-run into the city, just like many other people do, including the people of Mandurah now, thanks to Hon Alannah MacTiernan and the vision and foresight of the government of the day.

It is quite offensive that the debate on this motion has been described as a political football. This is about a real outcome for a community that has needed it for a long time. I would encourage anyone who thinks that Ellenbrook is not worthy of a rail line to say so publicly either during this debate or outside this place, because Ellenbrook is worthy of a railway line. It is time that this state invested in this community and provided this really important infrastructure, because this is about not just today, but also the future. There is a strong future in that north-eastern corridor of Perth.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [12.28 pm] — in reply: I thank Hon Charles Smith for giving me the opportunity to reply. I want to thank all the speakers but I will address the comments of the second last speaker first and the motivation for raising this issue. The motivation for raising this issue today in this chamber is to give an opportunity to anybody who is not supportive of this particular project to air those feelings. I can thankfully say that I do not believe that anybody who spoke did so in opposition to this project. I am very pleased about that. But I was starting to hear similar murmurings to that which occurred prior to the Mandurah line going ahead—maybe it should not be built and it is not a good use of money et cetera. I want members in this chamber to have an opportunity to indicate whether they are in favour of the project or not. That was the motivation behind the motion. I want to thank Hon Simon O'Brien. I had a little chuckle when he talked about a particular government and made a "cut the cloth" remark. I thought that was quite interesting. The other comment Hon Simon O'Brien made was that the department was not necessarily in favour. I believe that we need to lead the departments—

Extract from *Hansard*

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obviously take advice, but not necessarily be led by them. During 2008–10, this was identified as the fastest growing area in Australia, and continues to be so.

I want to thank Hon Alanna Clohesy, Hon Alison Xamon, Hon Samantha Rowe and Hon Darren West. The only thing I will say is that it is very clear that this chamber is very supportive of the project. I am glad that it is finally coming to being and with regards to credit, I believe there is a lot of credit to go around for everybody.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.