

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT — ADVERTISING REVENUE

Statement

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [5.43 pm]: I want to make some comments following on from the comments made by the Minister for Transport in question time today about the government's plans to derive in the next financial year \$5 million from increased advertising within the Department of Transport. This is not a scare campaign that has been concocted by the opposition. It is included in the government budget documents. At page 74 of last year's budget paper No 3 it states —

additional revenue of \$2.5 million (rising to \$10 million in the outyears) for the Departments of Planning and Transport from increased advertising activity, including billboard advertising and signage space on departmental infrastructure, online advertising and vehicle advertising;

The budget detailed an allocation of \$2.5 million in 2009–10; \$5 million in 2010–11; and \$10 million in the two financial years after that in the forward estimates. There has never been a change to the budget to suggest that requirement of the Economic Audit Committee has been removed.

The Minister for Transport knows that he has to comply with the Economic Audit Committee. He did that with the Perth parking levy. It was his excuse that he was told to do it by the Economic Audit Committee.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I have never said any such thing. When did I say that?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The minister has said that. I want to finish so Hon Giz Watson can get a bit of a go.

It is interesting that the government imposed a requirement on the department. From answers to questions subsequent to that budget it became very clear that it had become the responsibility of the Department of Transport to come up with the money.

Then we asked about the full amounts and whether the Department of Planning was engaged in finding that additional revenue.

Then when we asked questions of the government during the estimates hearing last year, we were provided with an answer by a Mr D'souza, as seen on page E656 of the *Hansard* of 18 June 2009. His answer reads —

The objective is that that \$2 million will be raised through billboards and advertisements at boat harbours such as Hillarys Boat Harbour and Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour.

That is what we were told by departmental officers in 2009. The minister told us in answer to questions in this place that the Department of Transport is investigating signage and advertising in its metropolitan boat harbours to increase revenues. They were the minister's own words. He also said that that was on hold until such time as amendments were made to the State Trading Concerns Act 1916 that would authorise the department to generate income in this way. This is not a scare campaign that is being run by the opposition; it is information in the government's budget—information provided by the minister and officers of his department.

Those amendments to the State Trading Concerns Act that will allow the Department of Transport to generate income this way have now been gazetted and put on the public record. I will quote from the *Government Gazette* of 26 February —

The provision or sale by the Department of Transport of advertising opportunities, or opportunities to participate in arrangements in the nature of advertising or having a purpose similar to advertising, in relation to its activities.

Everybody in this chamber should expect that before those amendments are passed, the government should explain to us how it will achieve \$5 million in advertising revenue. That is what the press release I sent to the *Fremantle Herald* was about. The opening line was —

The Barnett Government must explain exactly what advertising signage it proposes to construct at Fremantle and Hillarys Boat Harbours, Shadow Minister for Transport Ken Travers said today.

I made it very clear when I provided the photographs that it was an extreme example to give an idea of what would be possible, but I did not say for certain that the government was going to do that. The problem is that until the government comes clean about what it is proposing, we will be left in the dark.

Let us think about how \$5 million can be raised from advertising. Let us think about the other agencies that already have billboards across the state of Western Australia, such as the Public Transport Authority. I have previously asked questions in this house about what is listed in the annual report of the PTA. I asked a question of the minister on 16 June 2009 about whether he could confirm that the advertising listed in note 18 on

page 115 of the annual report of the PTA was for billboard advertising on PTA land and advertising on buses. The minister confirmed that that was the case and that that was all that was included in the amount listed at note 18. The total amount raised by the PTA in 2008 from all of the billboards it has and all of the advertising on buses was \$4 647 000. It achieved that amount by having 190 active billboards.

The other part of my press release stated —

... under these arrangements, revenue can also be generated through advertising enclosed within Government mailouts such as driver's license renewal documents.

“The Barnett Government must outline who is able to advertise in these mailouts and what type of material people can expect to receive in their mail ...

Hon Michael Mischin: Why don't you do a few mock-ups so that people can be scared about it instead?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think people should be scared about this. The government has had the regulations before the Parliament for 12 months. I asked the minister today to precisely detail how the department intends to raise this additional revenue and how much will be raised from each activity, and did we get an answer to that question? No, we did not!

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No, we have not! If the member was listening, I just made it very clear that the reason I talked about billboards at Fremantle and Hillarys boat harbours is because an officer of the minister's department told us that that is where it is going to raise the money. I do not think that \$5 million could be raised in that way. Even if the government built all the billboards that were in the mock-ups that I provided to the *Fremantle Herald*, it would be impossible to raise \$5 million in advertising in that way. I do not think he will be able to raise \$5 million in advertising by sticking things into the envelopes for drivers' licence renewals. We do not need from the Minister for Transport the glib answers we got today—ridiculous comments such as, “If the shadow minister spent more time developing policy,” when the policy this minister took to the last election was basically a copy of the Labor initiatives, many of which he has now ditched. We will have a comprehensive policy. People in Australia know that Labor stands for better public transport, and this minister's government does not.

That aside, we need from this minister an explanation of how the government will raise this \$5 million. He should stop obfuscating and answer the question. How will he raise the \$5 million he requires? He has already said that at least one way he will do it is by installing billboards at Fremantle and Hillarys boat harbours. I want to know how many billboards will be erected at those boat harbours, and how big they will be.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When they put the billboards up there I hope Hon Michael Mischin will stand out there and say to the people of Hillarys when they complain because there was no consultation, “I supported it.” I hope he is there when the public meetings are held about his government putting up billboards. The minister's officers have said he is going to erect billboards at Fremantle and Hillarys boat harbours.

Hon Michael Mischin interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If he does not want a scare campaign, the minister can close down the debate today and answer the question of how he will raise the \$5 million. If he thinks it is a scare campaign he should answer the question. The problem is, he cannot raise that money that way. The Public Transport Authority of WA with 190 billboards cannot do it. There will need to be a lot of billboards. I note that a similar change has been included to allow the Swan River Trust to provide advertising. We do not know whether it is intended to put some of these billboards along the land controlled by the Swan River Trust. We know from the government's own words that it is going to erect billboards at Fremantle and Hillarys boat harbours. I want to know how many and what size. While the minister refuses to answer the question, we can only conclude that the government is very embarrassed. It wants the regulations passed and then it will erect the billboards knowing that it cannot be stopped.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I now have a dilemma. I was trying to be fair to all members and I was trying to give Hon Giz Watson the call because she stood earlier because she wanted to make some comments. However, I am now obliged to provide the government minister, who has been mentioned in the previous statement, an opportunity to respond; therefore, one member will miss out, and that is very unfortunate and unfair. But I cannot do anything about it, I am afraid.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Transport) [5.52 pm]: I regret that is the practice, but in view of the last contribution, this matter would be misrepresented in the public domain by members opposite if I did not seek the call now. I apologise that you find yourself in an awkward position, Mr

President. I know how fairly you conduct the affairs of this house. I apologise also to Hon Giz Watson, who may yet get a minute if she wants it.

Last Thursday the Barnett government delivered a budget that was remarkable, given the economic circumstances of the times. It was full of many beneficial programs and projects for the benefit of the people of Western Australia. I went to Geraldton to do the proverbial budget sale appearance at the local Western Australian Chamber of Commerce. We were sent to the various Chambers of Commerce at regional centres because people want to know what is in the budget. We had very good feedback on the airwaves as we were announcing local, regional and statewide projects.

Hon Ken Travers: What does this have to do with the issue I raised?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I remember a number of things about it. I did a number of radio interviews, most of them about the benefits of, for example, our grain rail network package. It was great to follow on from the commentary of people like Mike Norton of the WA Farmers Federation, who approves of what we are doing. Of course the Labor Party does not approve of what we are doing. It was good to be able to get onto the television and the airwaves and the newspapers and talk about the initiatives that this government has managed to advance, such as air-conditioning in school buses right across the state. One day I will tell the house about the nightmare that used to exist and that we are going to relieve. There are a whole lot of other things that we are doing. I did one other interview just before I left. It was on the Howard Sattler program. Given that a budget had come down within the last day, one would have thought that there would be plenty for members of the Labor Party to go on about. I was asked to respond to the big story of the day from the Leader of the Opposition in this place, Hon Sue Ellery, who was saying that we had let down and betrayed seniors in respect of providing free public transport. I mean, I do not know where that nonsense has come from, but that is the sort of wet lettuce leaf that we were being slapped around with. The next thing, with all of that in the budget, with all the details, and with all the possibilities for the opposition to come up with its own policies, we get this stunt about how giant billboards will be appearing at Hillarys boat harbour and so on.

Hon Kate Doust: You are just filling in time because your ego has been so bruised, when we could have heard from Hon Giz Watson, who would have made a valuable contribution.

Hon Ken Travers: The answer is you do not have a clue about what is going on in your department!

The PRESIDENT: Order! There are 24 seconds left. Let us use them constructively.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The honourable member clearly—what is the expression?—shoots first and asks questions later. He is out there in the public with a ridiculous scare campaign.

Hon Ken Travers: It is in *Hansard*!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Everyone will see that he is misleading the people of Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Perhaps it is a good thing that we will be having a couple of weeks' break. The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.56 pm
