

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski;
Mr Matthew Hughes; Mr John McGrath

Division 39: Transport, \$135 763 000 —

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chair.

Ms R. Saffioti, Minister for Transport.

Mr P. Woronzow, Acting Director General.

Mr I. Cameron, Managing Director.

Mr P. Parolo, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr A. Kannis, Managing Director, Metronet.

Mr P. Abromeit, Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Good morning, members. This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered, and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. Estimates committee's consideration of the estimates is restricted to the discussion of items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting day. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information she agrees to provide, and I will then allocate a reference number. If the supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to that member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

Member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: Minister, I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 2, page 586, "Westport: Port and Environs Strategy". Will the minister provide a complete breakdown of the funding for each of the years indicated in the budget? Does the funding include any money for upgrades to infrastructure, land acquisition or capital works, or is the money for planning purposes?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Thank you; I will refer to my notes. The member is looking for the breakdown of what figure, on what line? Is the member referring to "Ongoing Initiatives"?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes; that is right.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I can provide a breakdown of the major categories. The first is environment and social amenity sustainability. I think this money eventually will be transferred to the relevant agencies, but it is shown as a holding in Transport. These are all the environmental assessments and so forth. It is \$2.467 million in 2020–21, \$6.609 million in 2021–22, \$6.259 million in 2022–23 and \$5.77 million in 2023–24. The line for environmental and sustainability assessments and approvals processes is \$21.1 million over the next four years.

I will go through the other key points. Salaries is \$2.8 million in 2020–21, \$4.6 million in 2021–22, \$4.7 million in 2022–23 and \$4.7 million in 2023–24, so that is \$16.8 million.

Supply chain development is basically looking at the entire supply chain. Working through the Freight and Logistics Council and so forth, we are looking at how we can better manage and plan for the movement of freight across the suburbs. It is \$865 000 in 2020–21, \$1.9 million in 2021–22, \$8.9 million in 2022–23 and \$4.8 million in 2023–24. That adds up to about \$16.4 million.

The next category is all about ground truthing, further work on local surveys and other work in the local area. It is \$233 000 in 2020–21, \$1 million in 2021–22, \$1.3 million in 2022–23 and \$1.2 million in 2023–24, totalling \$3.7 million.

Through the project management office, we make sure that we have a strong governance regime over the Westport Taskforce. It is \$722 000 in 2020–21, \$877 000 in 2021–22, \$673 000 in 2022–23 and \$1.09 million in 2023–24. For project governance and project management office engagement, it is \$948 000 in 2020–21, \$1.5 million in 2021–22, \$1.3 million in 2022–23 and \$1.7 million in 2023–24. As I said, that covers community engagement, project governance and project management.

In land use, again we are looking at further planning in particular. As we have said, Westport is about not only a port but also the entire supply chain, so it is all about how we better move freight throughout the suburbs from the regions.

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We are very keen to make sure that we coordinate land use in conjunction with the port. There has been a lot of discussion and debate over many years about what should happen in that area. We are trying to provide clarity for not only the future economic growth of the state, but also the hundreds of landowners who have had a lot of uncertainty over many years. One of our aims is to try to end that uncertainty and make sure that there is clarity about land use in the future. It is zero in 2020–21, \$148 000 in 2021–22, \$297 000 in 2022–23 and \$297 000 in 2023–24. Therefore, the total is around \$740 000.

The next category is commercial. I do not have the definition of what that means, but I suspect that relates to obtaining further legal and other advice. It is \$250 000 in 2020–21, \$120 000 in 2021–22, \$130 000 in 2022–23 and \$240 000 in 2023–24. That is a total of \$740 000.

For transition detailed analysis modelling, it is \$367 000 in 2020–21.

Economic development is, I suspect, funds primarily given to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation to further look at how we can work. Although that work is primarily driven by JTSL, this relates to further work. It is \$151 000 over the four years, comprising \$17 000 in 2020–21, \$24 000 in 2021–22, \$41 000 in 2022–23 and \$69 000 in 2023–24.

Again those allocations for economic development are probably additional amounts because, as part of the overall strategy, JTSL is driving future economic development and job opportunities, and as members know jobs are this government's number one priority. This is all about creating jobs and certainty. Westport land acquisition is also included in the Western Australian Planning Commission budget, which we can talk about now or during the WAPC hearing. That is trying to address some of the long-term uncertainty. For example, there is another \$20 million for land acquisition, primarily for Anketell Road and I think a bit for Rowley Road, too. As I said, one of the biggest concerns we have relates to feedback from landowners, and I think Roger Cook is dealing with them. They have had a lot of uncertainty over many years. One of the purposes of creating a plan and doing that work is to end the uncertainty for landowners and industry, and hopefully getting on with a bipartisan plan that will create jobs and economic development for the state.

[9.10 am]

Ms L. METTAM: Of those funds, and going forward, can the minister confirm whether it is intended that Nicole Lockwood will continue as chair of the Westport Taskforce; and, if so, what payments and allowances will be made to her in that role as chair, and in her role as chair of the Freight and Logistics Council of WA, one of the key stakeholders? Also, what payments will be made to Lockwood Consulting as the agency responsible for marketing and communicating? I am seeking clarity on the payments that will be made to Nicole Lockwood and to Lockwood Consulting by the government going forward in relation to the Westport Taskforce and the Freight and Logistics Council, as a key stakeholder, as well as some clarity on what has been paid to Ms Lockwood so far.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Nicole's contract has been extended to the end of this financial year. As the member will be aware, Nicole Lockwood is well respected in the freight and logistics community and she will continue as independent chair of the Westport Taskforce to manage stakeholder engagement and provide advice. She is no longer a board member of Infrastructure Australia, but she was appointed to that board by the federal Liberal–National government. She is well respected by both sides.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: She is a very good shire president.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: She is a very good shire president—look at that!

She was supported by both sides of government. We can provide the member with further details by way of supplementary information, but that funding would be contained in that breakdown, which I will go through again. The allocation for project governance and the project management office is \$722 000 in 2020–21 —

Ms L. METTAM: No, that is not necessary.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The question was: how much is she receiving as an individual and through her company?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We will provide that by way of supplementary information. It is an existing contract and, as I said, she is well respected—or she has been! I know that some members on the opposition side are not supportive of her. I think the member for Cottesloe or the member for Riverton made some pretty negative comments about her. I cannot remember which of those members made the comment, but she has been pretty well respected.

The CHAIR: Can the minister outline what she will give as supplementary information?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The payment that Nicole Lockwood will receive as chair of the Westport Taskforce until the end of the year.

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[*Supplementary Information No A15.*]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The question was not only about what she is receiving as chair but also as a consultant.

The CHAIR: At this point, the minister will provide supplementary information on what Ms Lockwood will receive as chair of the Westport Taskforce up until the end of her contract. Does the minister want to give further supplementary information?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will provide the answer in relation to the Department of Transport, but she has other roles across federal and state governments, which I cannot answer.

The CHAIR: For clarity, I will give that a further supplementary number so that we are really clear. Can you be clear about the information you will provide?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will provide the amount that the Department of Transport is forecast to pay Nicole Lockwood's consultancy firm in 2020–21.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much.

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In terms of working out that freight network, has Transport looked at the Kalgoorlie intermodal hub as an option for trying to reduce the volume of freight that needs to go to Perth, making that the internal hub taking that freight north? Obviously, a lot of freight from east goes north. Has the minister looked at that concept; and, if so, how much is that worth? I have an indicative number of about \$130 million to develop an intermodal hub in Kalgoorlie. Has that option been looked at?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member raises a good point that the development of intermodal hubs relieves pressure off roads. The question is also about the destination, source and volume of containers and whether intermodal hubs in particular locations will make enough sense to justify their creation. We have the existing intermodal hub in Forrestfield, and proposals for intermodal hubs in Bullsbrook, and Kenwick and Mundijong as we further develop that south-east corridor. In relation to Kalgoorlie, the member may know that the PortLink inland freight corridor project has received some funding through Hon Alannah MacTiernan as Minister for Regional Development. The government has committed \$300 000 to look at infrastructure needs and the development of Kalgoorlie, including \$150 000 to study rail freight volumes in the region. As a department we are participating in that study and we will continue to liaise with the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. But, as the member knows, that proposal has a number of different parts to it. It is a big proposal, which is why we have committed funds to look at feasibility. As I have always said, supporting intermodal hubs is a no-brainer as it reduces pressure off roads and creates employment opportunities throughout the suburbs. The benefit is twofold: it takes pressure off roads; and these intermodal hubs become employment centres, which helps to distribute employment associated with trade away from one centre, whether it be to the suburbs, the eastern or south-eastern corridor or to regional WA. They make a lot of sense. Integral to Westport planning is how we can support intermodal hubs. That is why, for example, we put funds toward the supply chain development under the Westport Taskforce.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister think it is a conflict of interest that the same individual is the chair of Westport Taskforce, a key stakeholder as chair of the Freight and Logistics Council, as well as the deputy on Infrastructure WA? Is there a conflict of interest with these roles for which the individual is paid to undertake? Also, John Langoulant is chair of Infrastructure WA and a key adviser to Westport. Does the minister see any conflicts there? I would like some clarity on that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think the member is asking for an opinion, which is not what normally happens in this process. Do I think there is a conflict of interest? The member is not referring to a particular line item, nor is she requesting budget information. If the member wants to launch a personal attack on Nicole Lockwood—go ahead!

Ms L. METTAM: We are talking about taxpayers' money that is dedicated to an individual who is making decisions on behalf of the state. This is an individual who is being paid for marketing and communications, and is a key stakeholder, and is being paid as a key decision-maker as the chair of Westport Taskforce; and also happens to be the deputy of Infrastructure WA. A lot of people in Western Australia have a good understanding of our freight network. I wonder if the minister sees a conflict of interest in having that same individual in this number of lucrative positions?

[9.20 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Having a well-respected bipartisan appointee—someone who was appointed by the Liberal–National government to Infrastructure Australia—with a strong resume and an ability to work well with the freight industry is a positive for the state. That is what I think; obviously, the member for Vasse does not. I take the member's commitment is to sack her from all those positions. Does the member think there is a conflict of interest?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, I do.

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Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So, the Liberal Party would sack her from all those positions?

Ms L. METTAM: I think Westport is a farce.

The CHAIR: I might just head over to the member for North West Central, just to calm it down.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, Chair. We do not have much time, so I just want to keep going.

Minister, I refer to division 39 on page 585 and the COVID-19 recovery plan. I have a quick question about the Carnarvon fascine entrance. What year and month was the fascine entrance blocked, preventing boats from going in and out?

Perhaps I can help the minister, to speed things up. It was April 2017, so after the March election. Perhaps the minister will ask her advisers whether that is correct.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not think it is correct. I think it was 2016.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, it was in April 2017 after a weather event.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will get that for the member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I want some clarity on that, because there is some talk about why the previous government did not fix it, but it happened after the 2017 election.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The former government put a jetty in there, did it not? It spent funds to put some infrastructure in there.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No; that was back in 2010. It was a boat ramp.

The budget estimates indicate that it will be 2024 before the project is completed, which is seven and a half years after the fascine entrance was closed. Does the minister find it acceptable that a major waterway for a regional town and for the travelling public, on boats and yachts, is blocked for seven and a half years? The Minister for Regional Development announced funding of \$7.5 million, of which only \$4.5 million is allocated to open up the waterway or for a permanent fix for this. Can the minister explain why it will take so long—seven and a half years—to be completed?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There are a couple of things. As the member knows, under the deed that was struck a number of years ago —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In 1995.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes. Under the deed between the state and the local government, the fascine was under the management of the local government. I remember meeting members of the Shire of Carnarvon who said that they were struggling, in a sense, with their budget and their capacity to fund a solution to the issue with the fascine. I know that a local group has been doing some dredging. At the time, they asked whether the government could take over management of the fascine. They also asked for support from the Department of Transport to help fund better surveys and assessments to see what could be done to make sure that the solution that would be implemented would fix the problem permanently. At the time, the Department of Transport became involved and helped fund those surveys. We also started negotiations, and we are still in negotiation, about the management of the fascine. There have been a lot of differing views about whether we should continue to pursue short-term options or the long-term option, which requires more infrastructure but will allow the channel to remain open permanently. I know that I have been involved in this issue, and also that the Minister for Regional Development has been there a few more times to discuss this directly with the key parties. As part of the recovery plan, we helped the shire secure funds to achieve a permanent solution. We secured \$7 million of funding—\$4.5 million in operating costs and \$2.5 million in capital costs—to work with the shire. A number of options were put forward. I hope to visit the Shire of Carnarvon soon. As I said, the Minister for Regional Development met with the shire and some of the key parties as part of the announcement of the recovery plan, and proceeded with further discussions. I think I also had a quick discussion with the shire president. A number of different measures could be taken; one was for permanent infrastructure. We need to continue with further work to make sure that the surveys lead us to build infrastructure that can last for decades to come. As with many of these issues, it will take a bit of time to get the long-term solution. It has not been done before because it has been under the management of the shire.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I want to clarify the management of the shire. The shire is not the owner of the waterway. I believe the Department of Transport is the owner of the waterway, as it is crown land, and there is a management order to maintain the fascine. Why is the landowner, being the Department of Transport—the minister's department—not taking responsibility for the ownership of the land? The Shire of Carnarvon has a management order over the fascine to maintain it, but this is not about maintaining the fascine; this is about several weather events that have blocked the fascine waterway. Why has the Department of Transport, as the landlord, not been involved from the get-go to ensure that that waterway is open as a navigable waterway?

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Ms R. SAFFIOTI: As part of that management deed, the responsibility rested with the shire. That is what I was advised and I understood. I also understand that this issue was raised when the member's party was in government.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This happened after the election.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No; I am talking about the management of the fascine transferring to the state government rather than remaining with the shire, because the shire had expressed concern before 2017 about the costs and its capability, given it is a relatively small shire with a limited revenue base and it has significant needs across both Carnarvon and Coral Bay.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the minister find it acceptable to take seven and a half years to open up a waterway?

The CHAIR: What is the question, member for North West Central?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Would that happen if the Swan River was blocked? Would that be unblocked straightaway?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Member, I make this point: the issue of the management of the fascine was raised during the time of the Liberal–National government, when the member for North West Central was the local member, and it was not changed. If that decision had been made by the former government in 2015, when the shire sought the reconsideration of the deed, and I suspect he was the local member then —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We are talking about the waterway being blocked during the minister's time in government. Can the minister confirm the waterway was blocked in April 2017? Has the minister got that information yet?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I can confirm that in 2015, the state Liberal–National government, and the member for North West Central as the local Nationals WA member —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: My question is pretty specific: can the minister confirm that the waterway was blocked in April 2017, in her term as minister in the Labor government?

[9.30 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I can confirm that the waterway was under the Shire of Carnarvon's management order when it was blocked in 2017, because the previous state government refused to take responsibility when it was asked to do so in 2015.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It was a clear question; can I please have the answer? I think the minister has the answer.

The CHAIR: The minister gave the member for North West Central an answer. The member cannot force the minister to give him the answer he wants. The minister has the right to give the member an answer.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am just trying to get the truth here.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I gave the answer.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When was the fascine blocked? Was it in April 2017 or another date? I am not asking about management orders; I am asking about when it was blocked.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In early 2017, while it was still under the shire's management order because the previous government refused to take responsibility.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What month?

The CHAIR: We will move on. The member for Darling Range has a question.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I refer to page 595 and the Soldiers Road, Byford, principal shared path. It is paragraph 15 under the asset investment program. It states —

\$3 million will be spent on a Principal Shared Path along the eastern side of Soldiers Road between Abernethy Road, Byford Road and 500 metres north of Bishop Road in Mundijong, where it connects into an existing path.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What page, member?

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: It is page 595.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What line, sorry?

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I just read it out—if the minister could listen. It is paragraph 15. I note that time is very limited. Due to the lengthy answers we are receiving from the minister and the need to be quite prompt on this, a short reply would be appreciated. Can the minister advise whether that \$3 million has been allocated to a department or a local government, or whether a contract has been awarded? Why has the cash flow been allocated over two years?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The project is for a 2.5 to three-metre wide, 5.8-kilometre —

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: I know what the project is; I want to know whether it has been awarded. That was not my question.

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The CHAIR: The member needs to let the minister finish. If members interject, given that we have limited time—I am recording the time, we had 20 minutes on the first question—I will just move on to the next question. We will let the minister answer and then members can ask further questions. Let us do this in a breathy manner—take a breath.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: Just answer the question.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a very good project.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: It is; we know that.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am so glad that our candidate for Darling Range, Hugh Jones, is doing such a good job advocating for the project.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: He has done nothing for this! Is the minister advertising a candidate during an estimates hearing on a budget that has nothing to do with elections?

The CHAIR: Member!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The proposal is for a 2.5 to three-metre wide, 5.8-kilometre red asphalt shared path along the eastern side of Soldiers Road and 500 metres north of Bishop Road, Mundijong, where it will connect to an existing path. The shared path will be suitable for people of all ages and abilities, providing walking and cycling facilities that can be used safely and easily by everyone in the community, which is very important. The project includes the provision of a 2.5-metre safety fence to separate the proposed shared path from the rail corridors. The path will be constructed over this year and maybe into the next. The city has provided indicative project milestones and the department is developing a grant agreement contract for the project. We expect that the grant agreement will be signed very soon. We will establish a memorandum of understanding, and the fencing and the works will commence early next year. That is my timing.

Mrs A.K. HAYDEN: When the minister said “the city”, did she mean that an MOU has been signed with the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes.

Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI: I refer to page 588 of the *Budget Statements* and the line item “Driver and Vehicle Services” in the service summary table. Can the minister please outline how the Department of Transport continues to ensure that Western Australian drivers’ licences are issued appropriately and legally?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I thank the member for raising the issue of drivers’ licences. I want to thank all the vehicle licensing workers and assessment teams, because they had a very difficult time through the COVID period. Staff worked very well through the COVID period; a lot of the assessors did a very good job. We are now in the catch-up phase, making sure that everyone who had planned to get their driver’s licence earlier this year, pre-COVID, can get their driver’s licence. An interesting part of the department’s work is the alert line—1300 040 456. Someone reported to the hotline that people were using fake Singaporean licences to obtain a WA driver’s licence. One whistleblower, in a sense, rang in. The department investigated and detected 173 fake licences, and, as a result 122 drivers’ licences have been cancelled in Western Australia since January. We believe those people are no longer in WA, or have moved interstate. Importantly, our department has been talking to other states, and it appears that a similar situation has unfolded in Victoria and New South Wales of fake Singaporean licences being used to get a state driver’s licence. As a result, those states are doing their own investigations. It is incredible, in a sense, that this type of fraud was uncovered as a result of someone ringing up the hotline and explaining what was happening. I congratulate the department for jumping on the issue as soon as it did and also for alerting the other states, because we do not want that type of activity, and WA licences, being issued on false premises. I congratulate and again thank the Department of Transport licensing team for all the work it has done over the past six to eight months. The team has worked very, very hard.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to ongoing initiatives and the “Westport: Port and Environs Strategy” —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sorry; what page?

Ms L. METTAM: It is page 586. It is a pretty simple question. Can the minister guarantee that the outer harbour and new port will be government owned? Does the minister envisage that there will also be automation at the new port and the outer harbour?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: On the second part of the member’s question, the Westport business case process is now underway for the style of the port and role of intermodals. On the first part of the member’s question, yes, it will be government owned. I think it is important to point out that the previous Liberal government’s plan was to privatise Fremantle port, and part of that was significant automation. I recall that the previous government spent between \$18 million and \$25 million, with I think Deloitte, on its privatisation plan for Fremantle port, and part of that plan was automation. I wanted to clarify that. I think the previous government even went to the stage of getting prospective

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buyers into the data room on Fremantle port. The previous government had opened up the data room and had prospective buyers walking through and looking at all the financials of Fremantle port. The previous government's Fremantle port proposal was in two parts—selling the port and automation. Of course, the previous government's plan was for a new toll road as well.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 586 and the fourth point “Coastal Protection”, which states that the 2019 assessment report identified 55 coastal erosion hotspots. Can the minister provide, perhaps by way of supplementary information, a list of those coastal erosion hotspots?

[9.40 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I recall that information is available in a publicly released document on the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage website.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the minister have any plans to deal with coastal erosion at those hotspots, because it seems no money has been allocated to coastal erosion, especially to the Jurien Bay marina, which has had significant fish kills. All the planning has been done, but there is no money in the budget to fix coastal erosion.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I have a couple of points. We did a hotspot report to try to identify and prioritise the top hotspots. As I recall, the two highest priorities are Thomson Bay, Rottnest, and Port Beach. I think it is those two; I might be wrong. Immediate action is required at those two locations. Areas are prioritised for immediate action and lower action. A couple of things are assessed, including the amount of infrastructure being exposed to potential damage. There is also a big debate about coastal erosion and whether we retreat or put in infrastructure.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Where is Jurien Bay marina on that list?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That is a new proposal. I think the business case has been developed or is under development. It is on a list of potential projects that the state and the federal government could fund. I am not being political about this; I would say this of both federal Labor and Liberal governments. Coastal erosion is impacting on many coastal communities around Australia, and the issues are similar. I wrote to the federal minister stating that we believe that, going forward, a partnership to support infrastructure is required. I have had no luck yet, but we have successfully put coastal erosion on Infrastructure Australia's recent national priorities list, and it is ranked as a top priority.

Mr M. HUGHES: I refer to page 587 and the eighth point, which states —

As part of recovery in our regions the Department is engaged with airlines to ensure minimum service levels for regional travel and will also undertake a review of the draft State Aviation Strategy accordingly.

Can the minister outline what actions the government has taken to ensure regional residents have access to affordable and reliable air services, prior to COVID and as we continue our recovery from the peak of the pandemic?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I thank the member for Kalamunda. We have always said that access to available and affordable airfares is a priority for regional WA because it is key to attracting workers to regional Western Australia and supporting economic growth. When people think about moving to regional WA, particularly those areas beyond a comfortable driving distance, they want the ability to travel at an affordable rate, and if anything unexpected happens, to be able to jump on a plane to see their family and so forth. That is why I see it as a priority. Of course it is about tourism; it is also about local amenity and making sure that regional Western Australians have access to affordable travel.

We embarked on a regional aviation strategy. We were finalising that strategy when COVID hit. In Western Australia, like the rest of the nation and the world, the aviation sector has been one of the hardest hit through COVID. We have had ongoing discussions with Qantas, Virgin—although currently that is a bit tricky, as it transitions into a new ownership structure—Alliance Airlines, Regional Express and Airnorth. We have been working with all the major carriers in Western Australia to get more affordable airfares. Members would have seen that the Minister for Tourism has announced some significant airfare deals for the Kimberley, in particular. Again, that is not only about supporting tourism; those airfares will be available to regional Western Australians wanting to come to Perth. We are working on other areas as well. Predominantly in mining or resource towns, like Karratha, Newman and Port Hedland —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Paraburdoo.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, Paraburdoo. We are working with the mining sector on how we can leverage what they do through regular passenger transport, or modified RPT, to guarantee community airfares. We have seen community airfares created for many towns over the past two or three years. We are pushing for a tourism boost to continue to drive tourism fares and a guaranteed airfare for regional Western Australians. Of course, other ports like Monkey Mia, Esperance and Albany have Rex services. We have been working really well with Rex to deliver affordable airfares. I know there have been some discussions about this is Albany—the member for Albany raises the size of the aircraft a bit—but a good airfare has been delivered for everyone.

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski;
Mr Matthew Hughes; Mr John McGrath

We will continue to work on and revise the long-term aviation strategy and we are in constant negotiations with airlines as we transition back to normality. Of course, there is always a bit of tension in the resources sector between charter and RPT, but we believe that when we can, RPT provides a more generous potential benefit to local communities. But we understand that the resources industry in particular is trying to manage and control its passenger lists to ensure that it is protected from any COVID.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister provide the average fare for the last six months for all regional ports in Western Australia?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We will try to do that, but many ports do have community airfares. We will highlight those where they exist; otherwise, we will try to provide that information. I will see whether I have further advice. I think the member also has a question on notice on this issue.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I thought it might come quicker this way.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We can provide it by supplementary information.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: If the minister is going to answer the question on notice, that is all good.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I refer to page 590 and strategic transport policy and integrated planning. The second dot point states —

strategic policy development which supports the achievement of sustainable, effective and practical solutions for Western Australian transport networks ...

I refer to the Canning Bridge bus interchange. Some of my constituents are very observant and have noticed that the federal government announced \$75 million for the Canning Bridge bus interchange, which people have been calling for for a long time. It is very unsafe on the highway, with buses doing U-turns to take kids back to the university, and it is a difficult area for people, especially pedestrians, to navigate. The federal government says that the project is expected to start in early 2022 and finish in early 2024. My constituents want to know how the state government will fit in with this time line, what discussions have been undertaken, and whether the minister can see this time line being facilitated?

[9.50 am]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How are we going to fit it in? We are going to do it. The federal government has contributed \$1.1 billion as part of a package plus some other funds through the regional run-off road program. The state put forward the Canning Bridge bus interchange as a priority project because of the exact issues that the member raised. There is no doubt that the Canning Bridge bus interchange area is becoming increasingly congested. I think the new smart freeway and the dedicated lane exiting Canning Highway, heading east onto the freeway, together with the Manning Road on-ramp, as the member would know, have helped to reduce congestion and improve safety in that area. But, more generally, as we continue to grow, particularly the activity centre precinct adjacent to Applecross, on the Melville side, that bus interchange will play an increased role in the future. We put forward a proposal. The federal government has supported that. We are going through our budgeting process to provide or match those funds. That will be done next month or in the coming months.

As a result of the federal government's announcement, we are looking at how we can put a time line to the project. We will be doing planning work as soon as we can. Currently, we have a concept design, but we have to go through a more detailed design process because we have the commitment. We are very keen to do that as fast as we can, but we have to go through the design process. We are at the concept design stage, so it will take a bit more work. I think it is inter-phased with the freeway and potentially the Swan River through the Swan River Trust, and that will require an approvals process. We are very keen to get on with it because we see that that intermodal hub—a different type of intermodal hub—between buses and trains will support residential activity and further use, particularly by people from Fremantle catching buses or trains. Of course, during football games, we see it very heavily utilised, and the volume of people creates a bit of a congestion point, I suppose—in particular, Dockers supporters living along Canning Highway, on the way to Fremantle!

The appropriation was recommended.