

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AUTHORITY — RAIL LINE CLOSURE — CANNINGTON–ARMADALE

Grievance

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [9.19 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport. It is that the Public Transport Authority failed to adequately consult and advise the community about a rail line closure on the Armadale line between Cannington and Armadale on the weekend of the Gozzy Rock music festival on Saturday, 25 February 2012. I know some members of the main community organising body, Gosnells Youth Advisory Council—otherwise known as the YAC—are watching us here in the Parliament as we speak. I want to acknowledge the tremendous work they do in putting on that event. It is a very professionally run event and demonstrates a degree of organisation that leads to some fantastic music creativity. I also especially want to acknowledge in passing the role of Chevienna Hansen, who was recently awarded the 2012 National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee Female Youth of the Year Award.

The Youth Advisory Council and the City of Gosnells go to all sorts of efforts to organise this event and leave no stone unturned in going to all sorts of detail to check things. We saw that one of the Public Transport Authority's TravelEasy notices was put out on Monday, 20 February, indicating that there would be some sort of closure because essential works were to be done on the Wanaping Road rail crossing. That is accepted. There was a degree of confusion in the Public Transport Authority because at 2.27 pm on Saturday, 25 February, a further TravelEasy notice was issued to indicate that there was a service disruption, effective immediately. I think somewhere in the PTA there was confusion about the extent of the rail closure and, therefore, a failure to contact local governments, such as the City of Gosnells, and advise them that there would be serious disruption on the line. That was a shame.

Had the PTA anticipated the line closure and contacted the City of Gosnells, it would have realised that an important community event was planned. Being a youth-oriented event, many people are reliant on the train line to get there. Indeed, the event is promoted as being only two minutes from the Gosnells train station, held in the beautiful Pioneer Park in an amphitheatre setting near bushland. It is a delightful and really good community event for young people, many of whom do not have their drivers' licences because they are too young. Instead of making it easier for people to get to the event, we suddenly made it harder with all this confusion around TravelEasy advices on service disruptions.

The position I put to the minister is that when the PTA does its line closures, it should be proactive and contact local governments and check that some sort of major community event is not happening. There should be some liaison. I am sure that the road works at the Wanaping Road rail crossing were essential; I absolutely support those. However, they could have been put off to another weekend when there was not an important community event going on.

There is a clear case here for some sort of restitution to be paid by the PTA in some sort of gesture of goodwill. A simple way for that to be achieved would be for the PTA to be one of the sponsors of the Gozzy Rock festival in 2013. That would be a very nice gesture and it would show that we are able to work together at a state government and local government level. It would encourage young people from all over Perth to use the train service to get to the Gozzy Rock event. People from suburbs all over the area come to Gosnells to enjoy some good music. There are also lead-up events. I should acknowledge that the winner of this year's Gozzy Rock was a group known as The Long March. They are really talented musicians getting together in a very pleasant atmosphere in Gosnells. It is an event to be encouraged, not to be affected by confusion from ambiguous advices on train line disruption.

The trains were cancelled from Cannington to Armadale. That meant that people were not able to come in from Armadale. There was, of course, the promise of the replacement bus service, but that never seems to work in as efficient a manner as the train service does. For young people who are perhaps going into a suburb with which they are unfamiliar, it becomes a reason for them to not attend the event. We saw a significant drop-off in attendance. Normally, we are counting people in the thousands; this time, over the whole 10 hours of the event, we achieved only 800 or so people. There was a real drop-off in the numbers, mostly caused by this disruption to the train line. No-one disputes that rail line works have to be done from time to time, but it could have been done at a much better time. It could have been done on a weekend when the same level of disruption would not have been caused.

I call on the minister to ask the PTA to improve its liaison with local governments and to not only rely on TravelEasy advices. I get those to my phone and find them useful, but I am not sure that in that case they were particularly clear. I know that the City of Gosnells employs a number of communications and marketing officers who constantly watch for this sort of thing, yet they did not get these advices. There would have been a case here for the PTA to have contacted the local government to tell it that it could potentially be inconvenienced by these

works on the line. The PTA would have then got the advice back from the City of Gosnells that perhaps another weekend would be a more opportune time for these works.

I think some small gesture of restitution would go a long way to fixing any disappointment and it would be a very positive step for the 2013 Gozzy Rock event, which will be the twenty-sixth time it is held. This event has been going a long time. We could all enjoy the festival, knowing that people would be travelling in safety on a good reliable train service to the event.

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Minister for Transport) [9.26 am]: I inquired with the Public Transport Authority about Gozzy Rock. I understand it is an important local event, but the PTA has no knowledge of it, unfortunately, in the first instance. The PTA would not have seen any need to contact the City of Gosnells because it did not know that the event was on.

The member made the point that patronage is impacted if we take out a train service and put in a bus replacement service. I am not sure that is necessarily the case. I recall last Easter when the Fremantle festival was on and we had to do some major upgrades on the Fremantle line, so it was shut and a bus replacement service ran that weekend. I received no advice that the replacement of the train with a bus led to a decline in attendance at the Fremantle Street Arts Festival. It may well have had an effect, but the PTA will not provide any restitution or payment or sponsor the Gozzy Rock event next year. I think that deals with the substantive matter.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: They have sponsored it previously, minister.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It is not doing it next year.

The member also raised issues around PTA's communication. My understanding from the PTA is that it went through its normal communication processes for line closures. It did not notify the City of Gosnells, as I said, because it was not aware of Gozzy Rock. The member has raised issues around communication. It would be fair to say that the authority always endeavours to provide communications to the public and provided a replacement bus service. I can say to the member that there will be no restitution or sponsorship next year. I do not accept the premise of the member's argument that running a bus service to replace the train service halved the number of people at the event. That is not reflective of other practice. We also need to understand that from time to time we have to close train lines to provide better outcomes. That happened then and it will probably happen again.