

FORMER MINISTERS FOR TRANSPORT

Statement

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [9.45 pm]: Earlier today the house heard another lecture from Hon Ken Travers. I must admit I do enjoy listening to Hon Ken Travers—a bit.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You would rather be spanked!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Let us not digress. I thought his reference to the last four transport ministers was interesting, and members were all trying to work out who the other one was. Did he do it once or twice?

Hon Ken Travers: Who? I was only talking about the people, not the number of times that someone may have held the portfolio. I was just talking about the four people who have been transport ministers during your term of government, as sworn in by the Governor.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I did it once.

Hon Ken Travers: And so far you are the best one!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Absolutely! In that spirit, I am not going to keep the house very long. When Hon Ken Travers was speaking I was not in a position where I could not make some meaningful interjections on one or two things that he was saying, so I take the opportunity now because I know he will be disappointed if I fail to do so.

We heard a very good talk, and were reminded at some length and with some feeling, about the most recent general election in this state. The allegation repeated as a recurrent theme in Hon Ken Travers remarks was that there had been undertakings promised in the last election, and the previous one too, and that there had been no work done, no preparation and no planning. I think the expression he used was this “hopeless government” or sentiments to that effect and that, “You can’t plan anything in transport and you make undertakings that can’t be delivered on, at least not without imperilling the finances of Western Australia, because you haven’t done your homework.”

I want Hon Ken Travers to go back one more transport minister, to Alan Carpenter—or it seemed to be, because he was the one who came out with a former member of the house, Hon Graham Giffard, who was the then candidate for the seat of Ellenbrook, frantically banging in the sign and saying that the Labor Party was going to build a railway there. Hon Alan Carpenter, as Premier, was there, saying, “Yes, we are going to do this.” That strategy did not work. One of the first things the Liberal Party said when it got into government was, “Okay, what are the merits of this railway?” No work had been done at all. There was no plan; no preliminaries—nothing.

A cost, conservatively estimated at \$700 million, was committed to during that election campaign and not one skerrick of planning had gone into it. Perhaps some of the allegations that Hon Ken Travers made about the current government might have some merit. Sometimes undertakings are given in the heat of an election campaign that perhaps can be criticised fairly by opponents at another time. He should not think for a minute that it is limited to one side of government in this town because I have just given one blatant example of that happening. What would it have cost for what was promised by Alan Carpenter and my old friend Graham Giffard back in 2008 where no preparation had been done? Would it have cost \$700 million, and for what? For something that, as the transport boss here in Western Australia would say, is a dog that does not fly.

There is another interesting point to be made, and I will leave members on this. I go back to the fifth last transport minister, or whatever the count is up to now. Hon Alannah MacTiernan was nowhere to be seen when those promises were being made. Why not? She was the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. She was big on railways and vision and all the rest of it that Alan Carpenter and others were trying to sell at the time, but she was nowhere to be seen. Why? Because one of her agencies, the Public Transport Authority, would have advised her—I am not disclosing privileged information; I just know how these systems work—that that was one project that would not have merit and should not be contemplated because it simply was not sustainable. She was nowhere to be seen. The question is: what happened with the interaction between her and the then Premier at the time, and was she even consulted? If so, she would have told Premier Carpenter not to do it as it was the wrong thing to do. Perhaps she was not even asked. Let us face it, my good friend Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich and her partner were on holidays up in Exmouth when then Premier Carpenter went to the Governor. Those opposites should think of all those things before they think that those sorts of traits are the province of one side of government in this state. They are not.