

RAILWAY (METRONET) BILL 2018

Second Reading

Resumed from 10 May.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.36 pm]: I rise to make some comments on the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018. It was interesting when doing my research to make a contribution to this bill —

Mr D.J. Kelly: Research—yay!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Are you right over there? Gosh, that is such a startling interjection from the Minister for Fisheries. Unbelievable! I was one sentence into my contribution.

With respect to this bill, Metronet was obviously one of the big policies developed by Hon Ken Travers in the other place around the 2013 election and then carried forward by the Labor Party, now the Labor government, prior to the 2017 election. I noticed from looking at the Metronet information that basically the former opposition, now the government, had a very good look at the former government's "Transport @ 3.5 million: Perth & Peel Transport Plan" and pretty much integrated components of that as part of its framework in the lead-up to the election. The two railway lines that will be enabled by this legislation, the extension to Yanchep for example, formed part of the former government's integrated mass transit network at 3.5 million and beyond—our planning strategy—which was a very well researched strategy. That extension of the Joondalup line to Yanchep would have been completed as part of this transport strategy when Perth reached a population of 2.7 million. That was what the modelling showed. That extension from Butler to Yanchep formed part of the former government's transport plan; indeed, so did all aspects of what the government is now calling Metronet. Every single component of that formed part of the former state Liberal government's public transport rail network at 3.5 million and beyond for the public transport strategy for Perth metro. Indeed, the Armadale line —

Mr T.J. Healy: Always promised but never delivered.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Is the member listening to what I am saying? I said it was the planning.

The Armadale line to Byford, for example, was included in the plan to be built and achieved by the time Perth reached a population of 3.5 million. Obviously, the previous government had already substantially commenced what the current government is now claiming as Metronet projects. I was startled, only one month into the current government's term, to find that the Aubin Grove station was being claimed as the first Metronet project. I think the Minister for Transport had only just been sworn in, and she raced out to Aubin Grove with an entourage to claim Aubin Grove train station as a Metronet project. We have seen the same sort of running out with all the existing rail projects that had already been substantially started by the former government—for example, the Forrestfield–Airport Link. That is apparently now a Metronet project. The Forrestfield–Airport Link had signage so that people knew and understood what disruptions they could expect to their suburbs; as I recall it, it had state and federal government crests on it. I noted with amusement that the current government waited an appropriate time to move that signage onto a side road, and we now have a big Metronet banner at the highest visibility corner of that project. The former government substantially started the Forrestfield–Airport Link and it was due to be completed by 2020, and it is now also a Metronet project.

I was also amazed to see the government claim the Nicholson Road widening project and the grade separation of Nicholson Road over the railway line between Yale Road and Bannister–Wilfred Roads. Once again, this was a project substantially started by the former government, but it is apparently now a Metronet project also. It is a bridge going over a railway; therefore, it is a Metronet project. We are now seeing any land developments in the vicinity of any existing public transport networks in Perth and Peel becoming Metronet infill and density-oriented developments. I am just waiting for the Metronet balloons and all the workers at the train stations donning red jumpsuits with Metronet icons all over them. We will have Metronet workers and Metronet commuters. Maybe we could have T-shirts to sell at the stations—"I'm a fan of Metronet".

Mr T.J. Healy: Member, I have handed out Metronet balloons!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Well, shame on the member for Southern River; that is absolutely appalling!

To return to the legislation before the house, I want to put something on the record.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I know members are interjecting because they do not like the fact that this concept of public transport is actually not new. The former government put a great deal of effort, across two ministers—the member for Bateman and the member for Nedlands—into developing the "Perth and Peel Transport Plan for 3.5 Million People and Beyond" so that we could have appropriate planning into the future for Perth and the Peel region to

ensure that the public transport needs of our state would be met. All this government has done is pull forward aspects of that planning framework into its election commitments. Now, thanks to the largesse and cooperation of the Turnbull federal coalition government, the state government has managed to start some additional projects that were not commenced under the former government. Just to be clear, the Forrestfield–Airport Link was already substantially started under the Liberal–National government. The planning for the Thornlie–Cockburn link was substantially started under the former government. I am very pleased to see these projects commencing because we knew from that very comprehensive planning document that they should be undertaken. I am holding only one volume of that document, but it is many pages deep and is a very detailed body of work, looking at what public transport we need to provide for Western Australians to make sure that our city works efficiently.

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member, can I just stop you there. You waved around a document and used the word “this”. Can I advise you that that will not translate well into *Hansard*; you probably need to refer to the document by name.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I did refer to the document earlier, Acting Speaker. I thank you for your direction. It is the “Perth and Peel Transport Plan for 3.5 Million People and Beyond”. It was researched, put together and completed by the former Liberal government.

This bill is somewhat different from the usual railway legislation that is brought before this place. Under, I think, the Public Works Act, there is a requirement for the government to bring legislation into this place for every new section of rail line to commence construction. This bill is different in that it makes provision for the additional railway projects that will form part of the completion of the Perth and Peel transport plan, or Metronet as it is now going to be called, to be covered by amending legislation to this legislation rather than by new bills, which is somewhat different from how things have been done in this state for many years. In consideration in detail we will ask the minister to explain why she has seen fit to make that change to the legislation so that it is different from every other piece of railway legislation that has been brought to this Parliament.

Looking at the detail of the projects that have been outlined, the Yanchep line started out as an election commitment of \$386 million, with a completion date of 2021. That has now come in at \$520 million. I understand that the railcar component of this project is funded through another commitment, so the project definition plan that is, I believe, before cabinet does not include the railcar component. I presume it includes the station components—the construction of stations at Alkimos and Eglinton.

As I said, the federal government has generously provided \$792 million towards a combination of railway projects in Western Australia: the Thornlie–Cockburn link, the Yanchep rail extension, the Denny Avenue level crossing and the Bellevue depot facilitation, and a further \$729 million towards the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the Byford extension, the Midland station project, Lakelands business case development, and some further projects that are yet to be agreed upon. The state government has been very fortunate in achieving the funding for these rail projects to allow them to commence. However, what is missing from a number of these projects is the state government’s funding commitment, which normally forms part of the arrangement with the commonwealth.

I am assuming that the stations will be included in the total cost, and we will go through this during consideration in detail. I have some concerns about the construction of the Yanchep rail line and why it has been progressed ahead of the Byford extension. When I researched the populations of the suburbs north of Butler, I found that according to Australian Bureau of Statistics data of 2016, Alkimos had a population of 6 269; Yanchep had 8 868; Two Rocks, 2 990; Eglinton, 1 680; and Jindalee, 2 519. That is a total population of 22 326 people, and they are getting a \$520 million rail project up to and beyond Yanchep. In fact, this rail extension has deviated east and now finishes at what I believe to be a Bush Forever site. I had a look at the Byford area, which has not been funded in this first stage of Metronet. It got \$2 million of funding for planning from the most recent budget, unlike the northern suburbs. Byford’s catchment has a population of 40 318, according to the 2016 census, with the population in Byford at 14 908, and 1 000 to 2 000 people in each of the little towns and hamlets, and 9 096 people living in Wellard. It is up to the government to explain why Byford was not prioritised over the Yanchep extension, with population growth to support a better business case, one would imagine, for a rail extension. Byford is in need of investment. There is a lot of unemployment out that way, and a lot of tradesmen looking for work. Local people would like to have a big local infrastructure job to be working on. They are already living there. Yanchep has a lot of vacant land. Indeed, there is an issue with the rail line moving further east. There now needs to be a land swap between a private owner of the land and the previous metropolitan region scheme corridor. That will add complications to the extension of the Yanchep line. We would think that, before funding and commencing a project like that, the government would have all its ducks lined up, completed the land acquisition, and know exactly where the line was going to go. All those issues should have been resolved. Byford is an easy one. The MRS corridor exists. There is already a rail corridor, where the Australind goes through. It is up to the government to explain why Byford is not included in this Metronet bill, with its population of 40 000 people, and yet Yanchep is included. That is one of the issues that the government will need to explain to the community.

The federal government has put funding towards the \$481 million Byford extension. The feds have actually stumped up \$241 million for that project, but the state has put \$2 million towards it—obviously \$239 million or so short of what it needs to commence the project. I am curious to hear the minister’s explanation of why Yanchep was progressed, with its lower, slower population growth than Byford. It would be interesting in the future to look back on this legislation and this debate, and the minister’s second reading speech. The speech says little about the legislation, but it mentions the anticipation that the north-west corridor is expected to reach a population of 740 000 people by 2050. That is a lot of people. The claim is that the Yanchep–Two Rocks area alone is anticipated to accommodate up to three per cent of Australia’s population growth over the next 40 years, due to the availability of relatively affordable urban-zoned land. There is plenty of land up there, but not many houses, and not many people living there at the moment, but they are going to get a \$520 million investment to share amongst those 22 000 people. I am sure they will be very grateful to the government for that.

Mr D.J. Kelly: Surely it is better to build the train line before the people arrive, rather than to do what you did in Ellenbrook, and put the people up there and then not build the train line?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Minister, I think the member is not inviting interjections.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We have an interjection from the member for Bassendean. Once again, if we build it, they will come. That is a great and responsible way to progress planning, is it not? It is interesting that the member mentions Ellenbrook. Which government put Ellenbrook out in the middle of nowhere, with no rail connection? Which government built Ellenbrook? Which government said, “We’re going to put a suburb out in the middle of nowhere and leave it stranded without public transport.” Which government did that? That was a Labor government, member for Bassendean. A Labor government put Ellenbrook where it is, and then they come into this place and say —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough, I am on my feet. I have to counsel you, member for Scarborough. If you provoke people, you will get the predicted response. Members, can I just say to everyone else, please listen to the member in silence. Thank you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It is interesting that the member believes that, although his government, the Labor government at the time, built Ellenbrook and did not put in the rail line, it should have put the rail line in before it built the suburb there, so that people have a way to get to and from Ellenbrook. That is what he said; he is on the record.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Keep interjecting, member for Bassendean; Minister for Fisheries. I love his interjections, because they provide us with a great deal of amusement.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Keep digging; keep digging.

The Thornlie–Cockburn line is a great project. It is part of the Perth and Peel transport plan.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This Thornlie–Cockburn line makes so much sense as a rail project to be funded because it helps with the densification of the inner suburban area. It is not chasing urban sprawl, building a rail line and waiting for the houses to grow all the way out into the outer suburbs. That is our infrastructure challenge in Western Australia. The Thornlie–Cockburn line links up the Mandurah line with the Armadale line and provides an opportunity for commuters to move about more freely between employment centres across the metropolitan area. When the Mandurah line, for example, was proposed, there were 55 000 people living in Mandurah as a destination, but right along the way where the Mandurah line was due to go there were population centres. The Cockburn precinct was destined to become a high-density retail precinct, and there was the Murdoch education and health precinct, so it made sense. I believe the Court government did the planning for the Mandurah rail to go where it did because these development nodes already existed, and commuters already had a need for public transport to get to and from their employment centres. Building a railway line to a centre like Mandurah, with a population of 55 000 at the time, and population centres all the way along makes a really good case for patronage numbers for these projects. Indeed, that is what we have between Thornlie and Cockburn, and that is why, as part of the Perth and Peel transport plan that the member for Nedlands and the member for Bateman had carriage of in

the former government, we prioritised, and did a substantial amount of planning for the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. That is a really good, sensible project. The former member for Southern River, Peter Abetz, campaigned relentlessly for the Thornlie–Cockburn line, and that is why so much planning went into that project, and the present government has come into this transport portfolio with a significant amount of the preparatory work for the Thornlie–Cockburn Link completed. That allows the government to commence that project. Once again, without the largesse of our counterparts in Canberra—the Turnbull government’s commitment to rail projects —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I want to hear what the member has to say.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Without the Turnbull government’s commitment to all these rail projects, they would not be happening. Let us just go back over it.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the second time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Members opposite do not like it when I read out the federal government’s commitment to these rail projects, do they? The federal government has allocated \$792 million to key Western Australian projects. It is funding, substantially, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, the Yanchep rail extension, and \$729 million is going to the Morley–Ellenbrook line and the Byford extension. Clearly, that first tranche of projects were the ones that this government took to Canberra and said, “We’re going to fund Yanchep and build that railway before people live there, as a priority”, and the federal government said, “You’re the government. You came in on a landslide. You’re now in charge of the finances of the state. If Yanchep is your priority and Byford isn’t, we’ll build the Yanchep line consistent with your number one priority, or your top two or three priorities at the time.” So, two budgets in, and we get \$2 million of planning for Byford, and \$241 million committed from the federal government, but no money committed by the state government for the Byford rail extension—no money at all—even though 40 000 people are living out there and need a railway line to enable them to commute to their places of employment or recreation.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

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