

ROE HIGHWAY EXTENSION

162. Hon PHIL EDMAN to the Minister for Transport:

I refer the minister to today's small gathering at Parliament House to protest against the government's plan to extend Roe Highway for the benefit of the hundreds and thousands who live in and commute through the southern suburbs.

Is the minister aware of any alternative option offered by the Labor —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Every member has the opportunity to ask a question, and every member has the right to be heard without interruption.

Hon PHIL EDMAN: Is the minister aware of any alternative option offered by the Labor–Green opposition to meet the road needs of a forecast of 79 000 vehicles that would otherwise be using Roe Highway stage 8 daily?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for his question. Yes, there was a small gathering outside the front of Parliament House today. I was out there and Hon Lynn MacLaren was out there. We had a terrific time! I was glad to have the opportunity to greet the group. They were protesting about the South Metro Connect project. I was very well received. In fact, they did not stop cheering! The noise was terrific the whole time I was speaking!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members should not let the cameras excite them too much.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Thus encouraged, I wanted to give them value for money, Mr President. But basically what I had to say to the people assembled was this: firstly, I acknowledged that people do have different views, and they are entitled to protest or to offer opposition to government proposals, and that is something I respect. If any of us lose sight of that, the whole state will be the poorer for it. But I also make the observation that I cannot think of a major road project in the history of this state that has gone ahead that has not been opposed by someone, and I believe that will always be the case.

In relation to the actual matter that was being dealt with, I just wanted to remind the small group out there, and I remind the house now, that the Roe Highway extension is urgently required. It is needed to carry up to 79 000 vehicles a day over the next 20 years. If members imagine at the moment what it would be like to be without the Graham Farmer Freeway and the Northbridge tunnel, they would have some idea of the alternative that would be visiting itself on the South Metropolitan Region. That increase in traffic will be caused by the 150 000 or so new residents who are predicted to move into the south metro area over the next couple of decades; the development of large-scale industrial projects; the development of Fiona Stanley Hospital; commercial development occurring near Murdoch University; and, of course, the container freight task from Fremantle harbour that will more than double its current capacity. That is why we need it.

In response to the member's final point in his question, no, the Labor Party does not have an alternative; and that is something it should have thought about before it deleted the Fremantle eastern bypass.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Let us move onto the next question.