

FORRESTFIELD–AIRPORT LINK — TUNNELLING MACHINE

155. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Transport:

Before I ask my question, can I acknowledge the ladies from the Zonta Club Perth Northern Suburbs in the gallery today and thank them for the great work they do for women and children in our community.

I refer to the rebadged Barnett government's Forrestfield–Airport Link project.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house on what date she became aware of issues with the boring machine?
- (2) Why has the minister refused to be open and accountable by not telling the media that there were major issues on this multimillion dollar project when she provided them a tour of the project in February?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for that question. I do want to go through this issue in a bit of detail today. In relation to the Grace TBM, as we know, I was informed probably about three days before the tour that there were issues with some ground disturbances. There are a couple of key factors. Grace had been stopped for maintenance, and also the actual box for the airport terminal was not ready anyway, so no significant delays were being informed. What was happening then was that investigations were underway to find out what was happening in relation to that incident.

We all know that tunnelling in WA, in Perth, is not very easy. Remember the previous government in relation to tunnelling? This is what the former Premier said about tunnelling: "We're on a coastal sand plain, so tunnelling under Perth is very easy. You don't have to go through rock. You're going through sand, so it's very, very easy to go tunnelling." As we know, this is the first time we have been tunnelling through the Ascot formation and through those suburbs, and as result there is a mixture of clay, sand and gravel.

In relation to this subject, it is very interesting to see how the former government is running away from the Forrestfield airport project. We just had to listen to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday when he was talking about —

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr D.C. Nalder: It's a great project.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The member for Bateman is saying it is a great project. In relation to this project, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said —

... it is part of their Metronet project, it is significantly behind schedule and might have a fundamental flaw in the whole approach, that is tunnelling.

The Leader of the Opposition believes tunnelling is a fundamental flaw to the project, which of course he now claims is our Metronet project. The member for Scarborough said this about this project in September —

The Forrestfield–Airport Link, which has been claimed by the government as the first Metronet project, was many years in the planning, and indeed the former government started and funded that project.

So is it part of Metronet or is it not, Leader of the Opposition? They do not know.

If we want to talk about secrecy in government, a lot of the risks identified in this tunnel project were outlined in the project definition plan. Members opposite may recall that I wrote to the Leader of the Opposition last year, asking the opposition to release the cabinet records that were the project definition plan for this project. The Leader of the Opposition said, "I do not consent to the release of the documents as requested." Now we know why! We have found a section of that project definition plan on a certain website in relation to this project. This is what the previous government did not tell the public about this project: there are over 60 geotechnical risks and construction hazards that could affect construction. The key risks identified include excessive ground movement beyond acceptable levels at ground surface, and sinkhole formation at ground surface. This is what they refused to release, so to come in here and talk about secrecy —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! I want to hear the answer.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The whole project definition plan is not on the website. This particular section is. I have read that out because —

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Why did you refuse to release it?

The SPEAKER: Members, please.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Why did the previous government not tell the public before the election? As I said, we are moving on. We are building this project; we are proud of this project. I will make sure it gets to Bayswater and that the people of WA get access to world-class public transport.