

**RAILWAY (METRONET) BILL 2018**

*Second Reading*

Resumed from 27 June.

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan)** [8.32 pm]: How long have we got?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Matthew Swinbourn)**: How long would you like? Do you mean for this bill? As you are the lead speaker, it will be until members' statements.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN**: At least I will be able to commence my opening remarks! I am just trying to involve everybody, Leader of the House, as I am sure you appreciate!

The brief but very important Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018 contains some important considerations. I looked up the contributions of a number of members of the other place to the debate on this bill, and if anyone here is seeking to do that, I urge them to think again. It was not very edifying. I will acquaint members with some of the history of this bill and its process, just to put it in its right context, because a few people about the town seem to have a very misguided misunderstanding of where we came to in respect of railways that were proposed to be built under this bill. In passing, I will set the record straight about that.

In Western Australia, each proposed railway has to have enabling legislation. That is why we have bills to build railways. They are not about allocating funds for construction or anything; there are other processes for that. No, this is about where a railway will go and giving permission for it to be built—a practice that goes back a long time. I do not think I have to take members right back to George Stephenson, the Victorian gentleman known as the “Father of Railways”; I can update members a bit more quickly than that.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN**: Well, unruly interjections are enticing me to digress.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas**: He didn't actually invent the steam engine.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN**: No, but George Stephenson was known as the “Father of Railways”, and his son, Robert, contributed a lot in his time, member. I am glad members on both sides are all so interested.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN**: Prepare to be riveted!

Western Australian railways have an interesting history. The contemplation of that method of transport reinforces the importance of overall plans and a planning regime with a real long-term focus. We have not always achieved that in Western Australia, and I fear that we are even now failing to.

The railways that have grown up in Western Australia over the years have really been very modest by the standards of just about every other jurisdiction. Over the years, different communities have flirted with the ideas of tramways and trolley buses—all intended to provide a more modern way of getting people around. The so-called heritage lines that make up the main part of our Perth passenger network are very modest affairs, “heritage” being the operative word. They date back a long way and they were certainly around in the era of steam. The modernisation of those lines follows the same orientations, which is indicative of a couple of things. Firstly, it reminds us that they were built for another era and with different planning objectives and goals in mind. It also reminds us—I refer again to my earlier remark—that planning is absolutely vitally important, because the location of railways dictates so much of the development that occurs throughout the corridors they occupy. Indeed, the heritage railways particularly have become barriers in many ways to many communities. We all know about the saga, for example, to sink the railway to reunite Perth with Northbridge. We are well aware, I think, of the many at-grade intersections along the Armadale line, by way of one example, where the juxtaposition of road and pedestrian traffic with railways is now becoming highly problematic. Some of these locations—the Maddingtons, the Gosnells et cetera—used to be way out in the sticks; now, of course, they are pretty well middle suburban and the effects of traffic are greatly magnified. With that very much in mind, the theme of planning for railways and the historic—to some people, antiquated—practice of bringing a bill to this house in order to sanction by law the construction of a railway, suddenly comes into a newer focus. We want to make sure that 100 years from now, the things that are done in our time will serve well the people of the future. I challenge anybody to be truly accurate in contemplating what the Perth metropolitan area might look like in 100 years. When people of 100 years ago contemplated that, I do not think they came up with the model, the look, the practices and the technologies of today. We live in a time of even more rapid change, so heaven knows where we will end up in 100 years. But what we do want to make sure of is that large, heavy, permanent infrastructure, such as our rail lines, goes in the right places to service our needs in the future.

The question of planning has frustrated a lot of people in this jurisdiction over a long time, including yours truly. The idea that we need long-term plans, perhaps within the context of short, medium and long-term planning, to guide our future investment strategies is something that I think everyone would agree to in principle, but it is awfully hard to do in practice. I have discussed this in this place before and I will not go through all that again now. Here is a good example in this Railway (METRONET) Bill before us—an illustration of how planning goes out the window when politics comes into it. We are all worse off because of that. I will enumerate in due course a number of ways that this bill contributes to lost opportunities and, perhaps, arguable priorities.

For many years, the Perth passenger rail system consisted of the heritage rail lines that we are familiar with. Late in the last century, there was the addition of the Joondalup line, which made a dramatic difference to us here in Perth. There was argument at the time about whether the Joondalup line should follow its own corridor or should be co-located in the middle of the Mitchell Freeway. Substantially, it was ultimately located in the middle of the Mitchell Freeway, although, as we get further up the freeway to places like Joondalup and beyond, it tends to go in and out of that corridor over a distance. In future, we have the prospect of the rail line going where the freeway currently does not go but may well go in due course. I do not know how often you get up to the far northern suburbs, Mr Acting President (Hon Matthew Swinbourn), but the last time I did, I felt like I was about to go past Cataby roadhouse. We are pretty well getting to south Geraldton now with our urban sprawl!

**Hon Colin Tincknell:** You're heading up the wrong road if you are hitting Cataby.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** You never know; it is on that sort of latitude. Nonetheless, the Joondalup line is one of the newer lines. I will come to the Mandurah line in a moment. It is radically different in many ways from the other heritage lines we have. The stations are positioned much further apart and the trains themselves are able to develop higher speeds. Indeed, much of the focus of that railway is about moving large numbers of people at peak periods. That is the ethos of public transport here in Western Australia. It is a focus on providing the means to move the largest number of people that we can at the period of peak demand. Of course, for the rest of the day, the very expensive infrastructure largely sits idle. This is a common phenomenon around the western world.

In the early noughties, we saw the advent of the Mandurah rail line. It was interesting to witness some of the commentary today about matters related to the Mandurah line that touch on this bill because some people are relying on some very inaccurate sources of information. I regret that the Minister for Regional Development is away on urgent parliamentary business because I have been relishing the opportunity to kick around a few ideas about this matter in her presence. Perhaps we will get an opportunity to do that at another time. The Mandurah line, of course, is a much more modern rail option than were the heritage lines. Many of us can get even a bit nostalgic thinking about what the old Fremantle line used to look like when it had diesel locomotives on it prior to electrification of the system back in the late twentieth century. I do not know whether any of us quite go back to the era of steam.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** You would be the one if there were anyone.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** No; on the contrary; I am not as ancient as the Leader of the House might think. I have just been around for a while.

**Hon Alison Xamon** interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I am not ancient at all. If members look in the latest edition of the *Western Australian Parliamentary Handbook*, I think it lists about our 10 oldest members and I do not crack a mention. Give me another 20 years or so and I might.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Obviously, wise beyond your years.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I think the Minister for Environment has hit the nail on the head there. I am sure Hansard will have captured that—not an intimate image but an intimate insight, which I am sure will be communicated to others in due course. See my Facebook page if I ever get it up and running!

The Mandurah railway line is relevant to this bill because it goes back to the time of the second Court government in the 1990s. A plan for a new rail line to go from Perth directly south was hatched in the time of that Court government. It was a farsighted idea and it has contributed a great deal to the development of our city. The original idea, as I understand it, was to service the area of the south east where one of the railway lines proposed under this bill is now set to go. That was the idea because there was a large body of population in that Thornlie–Jandakot area that, frankly, was not well serviced by public transport and was seen as an outlying area. In the first instance, the way proposed to do that was to run a spur line off the Armadale line down through Thornlie and past Glen Iris to come into contact with the median of Kwinana Freeway, from where the freight line currently is, and terminate at what is now known as Cockburn Central, another major collection point. At that stage it was in the future. Obviously, that rail line was then intended at some stage to be positioned there with a view to advancing further south to service other communities; other communities that have since grown

up in that area. At some point it was decided that the railway needed to go past Cockburn to Rockingham. I think it was partly through Arthur Marshall, the then member for Dawesville, who was quite insistent that the railway needed to go further than that—it needed to go to Mandurah. Premier Court and others contemplated this and decided that that was indeed where it would go. A great deal of land acquisition and planning and all the like commenced. I remember asking, when I was first briefed about the project, “Why don’t you just go straight up the middle, as it were, looking at the map, and go straight to Perth that way?” I was promptly told, firstly, that the whole purpose of the exercise was to service those south eastern suburbs because that was where the passenger population was. Secondly, there were some engineering challenges north of Glen Iris that would be extraordinarily difficult to overcome. They were not impossible, but they were very expensive. There was also some conjecture about whether fast trains would be able to be accommodated in the corridor that was available within that part of the freeway at that time.

There was a change of government in 2001. The new Labor government wanted to stamp its own policy on this particular project. In due course it came about that the Mandurah line was to be called the fast direct route and it was to run from Mandurah, up through Cockburn and up through the freeway reserve, right the way through to Perth. The emphasis was on getting people from Mandurah, and places north of Mandurah, into the city as quickly as possible. It was reasoned, quite correctly I might add, that prospective public transport passengers, if they are looking at a long journey, would also want it to be a relatively short journey. We wanted to encourage people to use the train as a commuter option and get a whole lot of cars off the freeways, which of course were becoming increasingly congested. At the time there was much to-do about whether the direct route, as it became known, should have been the one that was adopted. Of course, in all of these things there are arguments for and against. I think the Liberal Party played it pretty badly in the way that it approached that because somehow the whole project became a Labor project, whereas in fact that was only partly true. As with so many projects of this scale, it was the sort of project that was pursued over successive governments. Nonetheless, a Labor government built the direct route to Mandurah and, no doubt about it, it is now a vital part of our public transport infrastructure. However, that is not to say it was not without some pain to some areas.

That brings me now to the part of this bill that relates to a link to the existing Mandurah line over to the Armadale line—something that was advanced 20 years ago, until the early noughties when it came to a great screaming, shuddering halt with the circumstances that I have just described that occurred after a Labor government was elected. I find it interesting to hear certain members in seats like Southern River and nearby talking about the history. I do not know what school they went to, but some of their take on the history of this railway line is misguided. At the time, the member for Southern River was the late Paul Andrews and the member for the new seat of Riverton was Tony McRae. The people in those electorates missed out when the Labor government decided it was not going to build a rail line to service people in the south east. That is the fact of the matter. I think I said at the time that those members should have been roaring like lions but they were going along like sheep, pretending that somehow the fact that the railway that was going to service their electorates now was not going to happen was somehow some tremendous victory for them. What absolute rubbish. What happened was that the then member for Thornlie, Sheila McHale, managed to prevail to at least get a station called Thornlie, which was a little hook off the Armadale line, which is there to this day. There was some disappointment there. But in due course we are now getting to a stage at which a railway is going to be built along that corridor.

I will be asking the minister whether he can possibly tell us during his remarks a little about why we have a need for a rail enabling bill in this particular area in relation to the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, as it has been characterised under this bill. I do not recall offhand if there ever was an enabling act for the Mandurah line going on that Thornlie route. I do not think it ever went through Parliament, though there was advanced planning for it. Perhaps the minister can fill us in on that little bit of history. In so doing, could the minister also reflect on why we need this enabling bill when the fact of the matter is there is already a rail reserve along the route we are talking about? Why is there a need for a further enabling bill when we have a freight line running along there?

I return to the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. I have seen a lot of members come and go in this particular part of the world, all stridently saying how their government’s rail policy in that neck of the woods is definitely the way to go, whether it is or it is not, and in opposition all saying that the government of the day is pursuing the wrong course of action despite whatever merits it might have. I have listened to a debate outside of this place where people talked about the planning that was going on under the previous government for future railways, amongst other things, and where these two lines should fit in and where some other lines should fit in and what is happening with the Forrestfield–airport railway and all the rest of it. I might make a few observations about those things in terms of priorities in just a moment, because it does come down to priorities. This is where politics, unfortunately, overtakes the need for sensible planning. Members will recall that I mentioned a little while ago that we all recognise the need for proper planning of our transport future. Why do we need to do that? Firstly, when we allocate land use, sometimes we are setting in train restrictions that will severely impact future growth patterns in the area where the infrastructure is to be found. In particular, railways have their own scale, but it is also very hard for people to cross from one side to the other. Railways tend to divide communities rather than bring them together. One need only

look at the opposite sides of any rail line to see a divided community. There are not too many places where people on both sides of a railway line in the metropolitan area see themselves as part of the same neighbourhood. One often hears terms like, “They’re from the north side of the line”, or “They’re from the other side of the line”, or “They do that on that side of the line and we do this”. That is one reason it is important to have good planning.

There is another reason that is just as important. When it comes to infrastructure—rail, roads, ports—it is all very, very expensive. A lot of our railways were built in the early days at a scale commensurate with the limited financial resources of the colony at the time, and certainly not up to the standards and scale we require today. To get out of the metropolitan area just briefly, members should go and have a look at some of the grain freight lines out in the wheatbelt, and particularly at the construction of some of the lighter lines. They are almost like the Castledare Miniature Railway in their scale. Members would be surprised. Members may be familiar with the sort of track infrastructure on the Mandurah line—it has massive rail lines set up to take high-speed trains and the stresses that go along with that. The sort of track that still exists out in the tier 3 line area is the most trifling little rail lines, quite often consisting of sleepers simply sat on the ground with very light-gauge rail track which, frankly, I would not be game to drive a train on half the time; indeed, not many operators would. The thing is that it costs so much to build freeways these days. It costs a lot to build the sort of rail infrastructure that we want at this time, because we have to have tunnels and bridges. Sometimes the rail goes over and sometimes it goes under. We have freeway lanes that interchange with railways. It is a very big and expensive business. That means it has to not only go in the right place but also be ordered and built at the right time, because it has a massive impact on our budget. Someone quipped that perhaps this bill, which has got the word “Metronet” in capital letters in it—which is a bit unusual—should perhaps be called “metrodebt”. Members have to understand that the railways that are built are going to cost a lot of money, and that is infrastructure dollars that are not going to be available to be spent on something else.

I was not in the ministry of the last Parliament but I was in the one before. The government of the last Parliament had its plans for a future Perth of 3.5 million people over the next few decades and contemplated a range of projects, which are basically reflected in what the new Labor government has in its own inventory. I understand that the genesis for one of the plans of the last government was back when I was Minister for Transport some years before, which was to provide for a plan that was not owned by any one government but would be seen as a long-term plan—something that would traverse terms of Parliament and, indeed, exist as governments come and go. It was to consist of short, medium and long-term projects so that we could plan for all the things that needed to be done by way of planning, environmental considerations and so on for that infrastructure in an orderly and timely manner. It was also about arranging for the funding and for a rigorous examination of each project that was seen to have its place in an overall plan. The Perth and Peel@3.5million plan was a continuation of that, but unfortunately it was, as usual, subsumed by politics.

If we go back to 2013, I well remember the idea that Hon Ken Travers had of a Metronet policy. It was certainly the flagship policy, if not the only policy, that the ALP at the time had for that election. On Ken’s behalf, I will say that I think this was an attempt by him to try to provide some structure and order along the lines I am outlining, but even he was overtaken, I am sure, by political imperatives. It was fairly obvious to us that the Metronet proposal of that day—2012, 2013—had a heavy rail promise for every marginal seat that there was. Everyone was going to get a railway. This was the Labor mantra. Labor said, “We’ll tell them that the Liberal Party don’t like railways, because we think that’s a strength. Vote for us and we’ll give you a railway.” It did not matter where it was; every seat was going to get a railway, whether they wanted it or needed it. That election was not a high point for the Labor Party, but that was a flagship policy. Even though Hon Ken Travers had gone by 2017, the name “Metronet” was regurgitated. It had been refined and became a flagship project for the last election—the one that took the current government into power. Yet if we examine Metronet this and Metronet that, we see that most of the elements were in the previous government’s plan, with a couple of changes, which I will come to.

The one thing we have seen just lately is that everything has to be Metronet this and Metronet that. It does not matter if there was a sign up somewhere saying, “This is where the Forrestfield railway is being built”. No; that had to be taken down and a great big sign put up saying, “This is a Metronet project”, because Metronet is a badge of the Labor Party. All of a sudden, any ideas we might have had about proper planning for transport infrastructure have gone out the window in the face of political imperatives. So it was at the last election—it was Metronet this and Metronet that. Now, everything has to be Metronet. It does not matter what is done—a Metronet badge is put on it. Why? Because the ALP wants ownership of it. It does not matter where the project might have had its genesis. Labor thinks it invented the idea of extending the rail line to Yanchep. I do not think so. Is increasing the electrification of the rail to Byford a new idea that came up at the 2017 election? Of course it was not. There are plenty of other examples of the government of the day’s plans being driven by the imperatives of the wider community. Nonetheless, we now have everything being badged Metronet.

**Hon Colin Tincknell:** It’s spin doctoring by the brand.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** There are some elements of that. It is rather unfortunate because a number of these infrastructure projects are good ideas for which the time has come and probably always was going to come. Some, I might add, have not.

We have before us bill 70–1, the Railway (METRONET) Bill 2018. I am not sure why Metronet is in the title of the bill and I do not think there is any satisfactory explanation for this, because the bill does not represent the Metronet package. What will the next enabling bill be called, if we get to see one? Will it be Metronet 2.0? Who knows? We will just have to hug ourselves in delicious anticipation and see what the government comes up with. But there is no need to call this legislation the Railway (METRONET) Bill and, frankly, it shows a certain mentality from the point of view of those who have described it as such that is really a bit embarrassing.

This bill proposes to give authority to construct two railways, or Metronet railways as they are called. What is it that makes it a Metronet railway? Perhaps the minister can let us know in his response to this debate. What distinguishes a common-or-garden variety railway from a Metronet railway? What particular type of pixie dust is sprinkled on these projects to give them this dignified capital letter term Metronet? Metronet sounds like something out of *1984*, does it not? The first authority is for the construction of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. I have already discussed that line and its past a little bit. The second authority is for the construction of the Yanchep rail extension. The typical structure of a railway authorisation bill is that it contains only a few effective clauses. Apart from the short title and the commencement, it states an authority to construct a railway and typically appends a schedule that contains a full description of where the railway is going to be. As members will see, this bill has two schedules, providing some survey points that describe the route authorised for the particular railway. Members looking at this bill will soon discover that they need something else, because those schedules are gobbledygook to read; they will need a map to show them the area in question. I have with me maps for both those areas that describe on the one hand where the Yanchep rail extension will go. It will run for some distance north of Butler.

The Butler train station is interesting. I am not sure whether it is the most recent train station to open; it is the most recent extension on the local rail network. I recall bringing a bill to this house as Minister for Transport to authorise the construction of that extension. I remember having to do all the heavy lifting about the business case to be taken to cabinet. I had to put up with all the sniping that went on from the then opposition. That is another reason I wish that the Minister for Regional Development were here—we could commiserate on this, because she suffered a fair bit courtesy of us when she was building the Mandurah rail line; so did the poor, long-suffering Hon Adele Farina, as parliamentary secretary. I remember that she had to answer a lot of impertinent questions couched by someone on this side of house. It was good to get that legislation through and to get out there and watch the construction works take place. It was a massive exercise, it was an expensive exercise and it was done at a time when it was appropriate to do so. We had to make the business case to the cabinet that I reported to and to the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee subcommittee of that cabinet, and this rail extension was seen as the priority because it was what was needed at that time; not, perhaps, railways to certain other areas.

Another interesting thing about Butler station is that it is the railhead. Again, I invite members to mentally picture a map showing the Joondalup line snaking ever further northward. The effect that has is that wherever the end of the line is becomes a giant funnel; it is literally the railhead. South of the railhead, all the individual stations, such as Greenwood, Stirling and other places, have their own catchments of passengers. But the very head of the rail line has a catchment area that is not only around the station, in this case Butler, but also all points north because there is no rail line north and all the passengers have to come to the railhead at Butler. That creates quite extraordinary temporary parking pressures, for example. Everyone wants and expects to be able to park at the railway station that they are going to use and that creates all sorts of difficulties. We are also trying to plan for developments around train stations, and if all the land is taken up with acres and acres of car parks, it is very hard to do so. In due course, Butler will not be the railhead anymore; it will not be the centre of the funnel. That will move further north again and will enable the Butler station to achieve a fuller potential than it did at the start. But that was always going to happen.

The minister might like to enlighten the house on the proposed locations for stations and so on along this line, if he is able to tell us, and perhaps indicate a timetable if he is able to do so. A subsequent minister oversaw the finalisation of this rail extension to Butler, but nonetheless I am pretty proud of the part that I played in it. I remember that I got my invitation to the opening on the Sunday, too. It arrived at my office on the Monday!

**Hon Peter Collier:** You mean after the event.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Yes. It was good because I needed to go to South Geraldton on the Sunday morning at sparrow's, so I needed it like a hole in the head anyway. But the station is a great benefit to the people of that part of the world and I am sure that the extended railway will also be of great benefit to those people who live in the catchment area and also those who will move there in due course, who are attracted, or enabled, in part by that railway extension.

Coming back to the other rail line, I have already asked the minister whether he could provide some comments on the need for, and the history of, rail authorisation legislation in this particular corridor. I have already referred to the rewriting of history that occurred in the early 2000s, when the Labor government of the day abandoned this route and tried to spin that decision as a win for the people who were to be serviced by it. Now it is interesting to hear the spin about how good it is that a Labor government will build this railway. It was in the planning stage with the previous Liberal government, yet some Labor members around now are claiming that somehow the former Liberal government is the reason that the railway is not already there. There is some significant rewriting of history happening. Unfortunately, I am here to correct the record. We do not want to believe everything we hear in the political sphere. I have described how I think it is a pity that the need for orderly planning that might succeed consecutive governments is, unfortunately, overtaken by politics although, of course, with any plan that is long term, it has to be dynamic enough that it is regularly reviewed to make sure that the things that are needed—short, medium and long term—have their rightful place, because needs change over a time.

In this case, some projects are prioritised, and I have to ask the minister why. I have already indicated that even though this bill has “METRONET” in the title, this is not Metronet. It is two rail extensions or one linking rail segment—a significant one, too—and another extension of the northern line. But is this the totality of what we will see? Is this Metronet in its entirety? I would not have thought so. I mentioned that the government has already re-badged the Forrestfield–Airport Link and one or two other projects as well. But surely, there is more to it than this. Where does the rest of the government’s Metronet plan fit with all this? Why have these two projects been picked out and prioritised? Why do they have a higher priority than other parts of the government’s plan? It is not my plan. It is the government’s plan. Why are these the higher priorities? Why do I ask that? It is because a great deal of infrastructure money will be spent on building these railway lines, so we need to run the ruler over why these ones have been prioritised. I am hopeful that the minister will be able to do that, but specifically perhaps he could answer this: what are the projected numbers—the abbreviated business case, if you like—for building the Yanchep extension at this time?

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with extending the northern suburbs railway. We will support this authorisation bill; it will succeed. We are not saying that we do not agree that it will be a great asset to the district, but why is this the time for it to be built, instead of other projects that the government has identified in its Metronet plan like, for example, the extension of electrification and the improvement of rail south of Armadale down to Byford? What is the catchment area now in Byford? How does it compare, for example, with the Yanchep catchment? I have no doubt that the minister will be able to tell us that there is probably double the number of potential passengers in the Byford area than there are in Yanchep—quite easily. In due course, Yanchep will catch up, but that already tells us that perhaps the government’s thinking is a bit out of sync. Maybe it needs to build infrastructure for Byford ahead of Yanchep. I do not know. The minister can tell us, if he would be so kind, because that is the sort of information that this house will need to know. Presumably, the business cases have been done and presented to the cabinet, of which the minister is part, and the minister has made deliberate decisions based on those. We know the minister has the figures and if he could enlighten us on the respective merits of those projects, it would be appreciated.

I have no doubt that we will see people flock to use the Yanchep line when it is completed. Members might be interested to know where the passengers come from who board the northern suburbs railway line. A lot of them come from a heck of a long way east from that line. They are not from the immediate area of the railway line. It is a very wide catchment area. That invites the question in my mind of whether we need another, more central, northern railway corridor. I certainly think we do. Perhaps the minister in his response can indicate to us why that has not been prioritised in the context of what we are discussing. That is not a major part of the debate, but perhaps the minister could briefly educate us on why that is not part of the Metronet priority now, and presumably is not in the foreseeable future either.

I will draw my remarks to a close fairly soon. Another thing that I will ask the minister for is an indication of the costs that have been, or are to be, applied to these particular projects. That will help round out the record. I know they have been mentioned on other occasions, but if the minister could give us a consolidation of how much money these projects are anticipated to cost, when the money will be spent and when the works will take place, it would help us in our consideration of this bill.

Another thing that needs a mention in the context of the second reading debate is something that we do not normally see in a railway authorisation bill. That is contained in part 3, headed “Application of Metropolitan Region Scheme”. It refers to how this authorising legislation will interact with Bush Forever areas and other parts of the metropolitan region scheme and with non-railway land in the context of building these railways in due course. Clause 6 is headed “Planning approval not required for certain METRONET works” and reads —

Despite anything in the Metropolitan Region Scheme, the following development may be commenced or carried out without the approval of the Planning Commission —

- (a) METRONET works that involve the clearing of native vegetation on railway land in a Bush Forever area;
- (b) METRONET works on non-railway land.

I would have thought that that is a little unusual in the context of a rail authorisation bill, and I am sure that that will attract the attention of members not only in the second reading debate but also as we go through the Committee of the Whole stage. I am not indicating any opposition to that. I know that if I had ever brought a bill before the house that was intended to be an enabling act with the force of a parliamentary act to say that this project will have priority over other considerations contained in other acts, members opposite would have been screaming blue murder. I think if I brought forward a bill to build Roe 8, disregarding environmental considerations and all the rest of it, they would have been squealing their heads off. On this occasion, the government has brought forward a bill that says that Bush Forever land will not count. We want to work out what that means. I can tell members I do not have any disagreement in principle with a bill that says, "We authorise the building of a railway, and we are going to make it happen." With that in mind, I am sure it will give the minister a warm feeling of satisfaction to know that she enjoys the support of the opposition in the passage of this bill. I am sure the minister will sleep soundly in her bed, secure in the knowledge that when we get through the debate on this bill, she will have a successful outcome.

With those few remarks, I indicate again our support for the bill. It is bipartisan support, which so often seems to elude members opposite when they are planning these important projects, but hopefully that is something we will get over in due course.

**HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West)** [9.30 pm]: I listened with great interest to Hon Simon O'Brien's contribution to the second reading debate on the Railway (METRONET) Bill. It is clear that his knowledge of the southern suburbs is greater than his knowledge of the northern suburbs. He mentioned the people in places like Byford and Midland, and the priorities of the government in this Metronet bill. One Nation is of the opinion that the government's priority for the Yanchep and Cockburn-Thornlie lines is not quite right. We believe Ellenbrook and the north eastern suburbs of Perth should be a greater priority. We understand there are issues and problems. However, over 22 000 people live in Ellenbrook. I cannot imagine what the population of Ellenbrook will be in 2041. The government has put the argument that in 2041, Yanchep, which currently has a population of 9 000, will have a population of 140 000. I wonder what the population of Ellenbrook will be—will it be 160 000, 170 000 or 200 000 people? When we look at the current population, we would think that Ellenbrook and the north eastern suburbs of Perth would be a priority for the government, particularly considering that the government has talked a lot about Metronet and it has been a very hot debate.

The government calls it Metronet. I am in favour of extending the rail lines through the metropolitan and outer metropolitan area of Perth. That should proceed over many, many years. It is good to hear the bipartisan support from the Liberal opposition for railways. As Hon Simon O'Brien mentioned, a lot of work was done by the Liberal Party in the past, and often that work was not recognised. It is good to hear from someone who has been a transport minister and is now a member of the opposition and can set the record straight on a few issues. There have been times in the past when, as a member of the public and now as a member of this house, I have doubted the commitments that have come from the Liberal opposition about railways. Obviously, what we have read in the paper or seen in the media has left out a big chunk of information. It is good that Hon Simon O'Brien has corrected some of the details. In looking at Metronet, I want to look at the big picture when it comes to planning infrastructure and transport in this state, particularly in the metro area. I may be a member for the South West Region, but for most of my life I lived in the northern suburbs. I would love to see the rail line extended to Yanchep. However, I do not believe that should be the government's number one priority. I think the government may have that a bit wrong. I would like to see the Thornlie-Cockburn line extended as well.

However, we also need to create a link between the north and north east of the metro area. That part of the rail network is just as important as the link that is now being planned for Metronet between the south and south east. There is an enormous amount of growth in the northern suburbs. If we leave it too long, a lot more than 300 homes will need to be removed for the Cockburn line. We know that when these sorts of projects are not planned, or are made for political reasons instead of looking at what is best for the infrastructure and transport needs of Perth citizens, we make it very hard for ourselves, and very expensive. We have heard from Hon Simon O'Brien about how expensive it is to build not just railway lines but freeways. As I have said, the government has got its priorities a bit wrong in this area.

We support Metronet and increases to rail transport in the metro area, for a lot of reasons. The first is that we believe in that. The second is that this government has had Metronet on its books for many years and is committed to it. It is good that the government is going ahead with Metronet. However, this government inherited a fairly big debt. It looks as though Metronet will cost in the region of \$5 billion. As I have mentioned, does the government

have its priorities right? What funds will come from the federal government? Can we afford it right now? Should it be staged over the next 15 to 20 years? Will the government get bipartisan support for the next 15 to 20 years for this network, which includes Ellenbrook and the eastern and northern suburbs of Perth? I have travelled to many great cities in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Many of the rail lines in those great cities are underground, as we know. People in those places do not need to go through the centre of London, New York, Washington or São Paulo to get somewhere else. However, at this stage our network does not enable people to go from Joondalup to Midland or from Cockburn to Armadale without going through the centre of Perth. These links need to be made for the future benefit of the public of Western Australia.

The government has other plans for the growth of Perth. There is talk of the Fremantle outer harbour and manufacturing opportunities in the Kwinana area. There is talk of the enormous population growth in the Pinjarra–Mandurah–Waroona area over the next 20 to 30 years. We need to plan for those areas if they are to be the growth areas of the future. I have already mentioned the area of Two Rocks, Alkimos and Yanchep. I do not know why that area is one of the big priorities. They are a priority, but they should not be number one. The government is planning to extend or expand three of the existing four major train lines. The links between the train lines will be important in really revolutionising opportunities for people to travel around the metropolitan area.

I will provide a good example of where planning and transport in this state are not working. Before I do that, I will mention the area where I think there has been a bit of a plus. Just recently the Swan Valley—a vibrant entertainment area for the eastern suburbs and all Western Australians—increased its number of bus routes. I hope that what has been done is successful, and that the patronage of those extra bus routes increases. It is pretty hard for people without cars to get out to those areas. I could say the same about the beaches of Western Australia. We do not have a rail line along our coast and beaches, from Fremantle all the way up to Yanchep. Just recently \$100 million was spent on upgrading Scarborough Beach, yet there is hardly a bus service there. The one we have runs on weekdays, but is virtually non-existent on the weekends. When we plan rail, we must also plan bus services and look at the big picture.

The world has changed. We have had many discussions in this house on work patterns. We have heard of underemployment and shift workers. Our society has changed a lot, and we need to respond to the way people work. Our transport system needs to reflect that. There is no doubt that catering for peak times, as the honourable member mentioned, is the most important thing, but by the time this network is finished, habits could have changed quite a bit depending on the way people earn an income. On the weekends, in many places in Perth the bus and train systems seem to close down; it is very, very hard to get any sort of service to so many areas. We are a coastal society. People love to go to the beach on the weekends for seven, eight or nine months of the year, yet we have no real, proper bus or train route along there. People without a vehicle cannot go to the beach in Perth on the weekend.

This state has had an issue with tourism over the last few years. We know that the government is trying hard and making many overtures to overseas airlines and countries to put a route through to Perth, and hopefully one day to the Busselton–Margaret River Airport as well; however, if we do not get the transport right, the transfers and exchanges between travel routes will be too hard. A lot of people will not have spare time unless they have a hire car. If they do not, they will need to rely on a very good transport network. It is important for this transport route to be done properly, but maybe we do not have it quite right. Some of the planning for Metronet and the extension of the railway was done a long time ago, and some of the information needs to be updated and looked at in the context of how Western Australians now live their lives—the way it is today and tomorrow, not the way it was yesterday. To give members an example, if I were to catch a bus from Fremantle to Scarborough, it would take one hour and 20 minutes—it is a 25-minute car drive. That is our transport network from Fremantle to Scarborough. That is a good example. Members know that Scarborough is being made into an entertainment area, and a lot of money has already been spent there.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.