

MUNDIJONG FREIGHT RAIL REALIGNMENT

Grievance

MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range) [9.26 am]: The minister will be happy to know that I get off my bike at level crossings! My grievance to the Minister for Transport is about the Mundijong freight rail realignment. I thank the minister for taking my grievance.

As the minister is well aware, the electorate of Darling Range—specifically the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale—is growing very quickly, with the shire in 2021 being declared the sixth fastest growing local government area in Australia, and the fastest growing in Western Australia, in terms of population. The state government recognises the need for infrastructure investment, and I welcome the minister’s role in bringing improvements, including progressing the Tonkin Highway extension and the Byford rail extension, incorporating the Thomas Road over-rail project, which reached a milestone on Tuesday, with traffic now proceeding over the bridge. The assumption of Thomas Road by Main Roads has also seen improvements in road condition, and future duplication will be very welcome.

I had the opportunity to visit Permacast in Cardup on Monday. It is Western Australia’s leading supplier of precast and prestressed concrete products, and it is gearing up for the Byford rail extension project, quadrupling its workforce and creating local jobs and local investment. The footprint for production and laydown appears to be twice the size it was when I last visited with the Premier and the Minister for Transport in late 2020.

This record investment in infrastructure in Serpentine–Jarrahdale brings with it inevitable impacts on residents and landowners. The shire has challenges in providing services and its strategic plans are impacted by changing population forecasts and state and federal government investment decisions. The town of Mundijong, just a few minutes south of Byford, is in a growth stage, recently receiving a new police station, and it is on the doorstep of substantial residential developments in Whitby, with others coming soon in the surrounding areas. Mundijong has a rail line passing alongside the town to the east, which carries the *Australind* as well as significant freight movements that rumble through the town. The shire has a longstanding plan to move the freight line to pass to the west of Mundijong town centre to improve safety and amenity and to develop an industrial area and intermodal hub.

In the area of Mardella, the residents had a degree of certainty for the rail alignment south of Mundijong Road, pointing to consecutive structure plans between 2011 and 2018, and investment decisions have been made based upon this. However, the 2020 structure plan provided a different alignment, which passed directly south, causing alarm for impacted residents. In November 2019, Mr Gavin Heley and Mr David Leitch reached out to me, as one of the candidates for election. I met with them and was taken on a tour of the proposed alignment option and their preferred suggestion roughly adjacent to the Tonkin Highway extension. I was struck by the contrast in the construction of residences, with significant homes built in the path of the newly proposed alignment and the lightly fabricated rural buildings to the north of Lampiter Drive in deference to the proposed alignments promulgated between 2011 and 2018. Mr David Leitch raised a petition, which was tabled in the other place by my colleague Hon Matthew Swinbourn on 17 August 2021, that essentially voiced opposition to the altered freight line alignment and requested that affected landowners be consulted and, preferably, a return to the previously promulgated proposal.

Throughout my engagement with the residents in Mardella and those who live west of Mundijong, it has been clear that there are competing interests and that there will be winners and losers. However, my overriding concern has been to achieve certainty for those residents so that they can move on with their lives—they can make improvements to their properties, they can make life decisions, they can stay in their forever homes or they can decide to sell and move on.

Susan Downs and Francis Trichet live to the west of Mundijong and their property will be directly impacted by the realignment, whatever the decision taken south of Mundijong Road. When they came to see me in June 2021, they just wanted a decision to be made and a planning control area to be progressed. I am very glad to see that Main Roads has progressed a planning study to realign the existing freight line that traverses Mundijong and Mardella to provide safety and amenity improvements, but also to give certainty to many residents. There was an extensive public engagement process, culminating in two online surveys and multiple community information sessions that focused on the community identifying a preferred route for the rail alignment.

On behalf of the residents in Mardella and immediately west of Mundijong, I ask that the minister make a determination of the preferred rail alignment and that this be communicated to the residents and the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale, thereby removing the uncertainty that has financial and social impacts on residents. Residents would also like a planning control area process to begin, which will provide further certainty for local landowners.

I thank the impacted residents for continuing to engage in the realignment consultation process and acknowledge the stress that the lack of certainty has caused. I thank the minister for taking my grievance.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Planning) [9.32 am]: I thank the member for Darling Range for the grievance. At the start, can I say that I understand how difficult it is for the residents and landowners in these areas, particularly areas that are going through a transformation from a rural setting to a more urban setting. There

is significant change, and it is much greater than it is for some people in established suburbs. In many of these areas, we are still not only doing the planning, but also delivering new infrastructure, whether it be in the north-east corridor, the area that I represent, or in the south-east corridor. Significant transformation is happening from Byford down to Mundijong and throughout the entire Serpentine–Jarrahdale region. In doing so, of course my agencies undertake planning studies to try to identify the best routes for road and rail.

As we know, the south west freight rail line currently runs through Mundijong, separating the sections of the town. All the planning in the past has recognised the need to realign the freight line to the developing west Mundijong industrial area, adjacent to the future Tonkin Highway extension north of Mundijong Road. A planning study has been carried out to examine the future transport corridor, mainly to improve the safety and amenity of the Mundijong town centre. The realignment of the freight line will remove the freight train operations through the town centre and the freight line infrastructure along Bishop Road. The north–south rail line through the town centre will remain. This line will continue to service the *Australind* and will also be able to be upgraded in the future when the rail line moves beyond Byford to Mundijong, which we are currently planning and building. Determining a preferred rail corridor will ultimately enable a reservation to be set aside in the metropolitan region scheme and provide certainty for the community.

As the member outlined, Main Roads has been consulting on this planning stage since 2019, including ongoing liaison with the Public Transport Authority, Arc Infrastructure, the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale and directly impacted landowners. I know that some of the proposed plans created a lot of angst in the community, particularly some of the new routes that were a greater distance from the Tonkin Highway corridor and bisected the area quite significantly. The planning study has included the assessment of multiple corridor alignments, environmental and heritage studies and extensive stakeholder consultation. I want to say this because it is quite interesting. In developing corridors, we have the landowners, who I believe should be the most important people in the process, but we also have a number of other considerations that have to be taken into account, particularly environmental considerations, which are sometimes very difficult to overcome.

In conjunction with the rail corridor selection, a short section of the future Tonkin Highway extension south of Mundijong Road was incorporated in the planning study. There were two online surveys and some community information sessions to try to identify the preferred route. Originally, the agency presented several options to the community. Based on community feedback and findings from a multi-criteria analysis, two options were shortlisted. Those in the know know them as option 3 and option 0. A second round of community consultation was undertaken for option 0 and option 3. The community feedback showed a difference of only two votes between the two options. A multi-criteria analysis had both options scoring identically across most criteria, with only a two-point difference in the economic criteria. Given there was no significant difference between the two options, a more detailed assessment that was based on land and community impacts then identified option 0 as providing better overall land use and options for the community. It is also noted that option 0 is the alignment that has been shown in the Mundijong–Whitby district structure plan since 2011. Although it was not reserved in any corridor, it was the alignment that many people based their decisions on, as the member outlined. Option 0 was identified as the preferred corridor, and we have approved this route to progress to the planning control area phase. Landowners and all stakeholders will be notified about the preferred route either this week or next week.

I thank the landowners, members and stakeholders for their patience in getting this corridor determined. Now there will be certainty in the community about the future alignment and we can go through broader communication. More detailed design work will be undertaken to understand the exact land impact. Because this will be the corridor, we will go through a more detailed planning phase to understand the exact amount of land that will be required and the exact route. The planning control area will assist in moving forward. Importantly, this will give landowners and residents certainty. This route will be more aligned with the Tonkin Highway extension, so significant infrastructure will be built in that area anyway. This will give more certainty. I think it will work well with what the shire has been working towards. We can now go forward with the next part of the detailed planning phase.

I thank the member for the grievance. I thank the community and the landowners for their patience. This is always very tricky. In a sense, there are always winners and losers in doing this. Not everyone cannot be impacted, but this is very important for the future community. This is what has happened in the past and it will continue as we continue to urbanise many of these centres.