



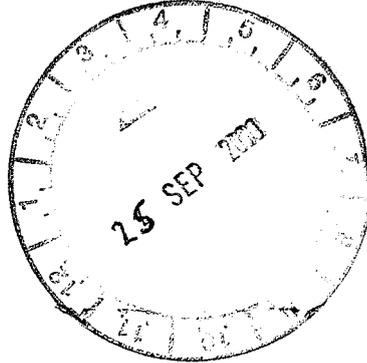
PUBLIC

Minister for Transport; Disability Services

Hon. Simon O'Brien MLC

24 SEP 2009

Our ref: 29-09038



Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Brian

PETITION NO.24 - PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE BETWEEN PERTH AND GERALDTON

Thank you for your letter dated 10 September 2009 regarding the provision of costs and benefits for the re-establishment of passenger rail services from Perth to Geraldton.

I have previously outlined to your Committee that the passenger rail service between Perth and Geraldton was terminated on 1 August 1975 due to low patronage, the high cost of maintaining the service and because the rolling stock had reached the end of its service life. At that time the train provided only one return service each week.

It was decided that the extension of the road coach services would provide a much more efficient, practical, flexible and satisfactory way of catering for the demand at a much lower cost to both users and taxpayers.

Travelling time by road between Perth and Geraldton is considerably shorter than by rail. TransWa road coaches are able to complete the journey between Perth and Geraldton in approximately 5 hours 45 minutes. The modern TransWa road coach fleet also provides state of the art access for people with disabilities and offers faster and more frequent schedules to and from Geraldton than a rail service could provide. Also these coach services include more intermediate points which the passenger rail service cannot achieve.

The proposal for a Perth–Geraldton passenger railway has been examined in the past, it was not adopted but rejected on technical grounds due to the cost to the State of new rolling stock, required line upgrades, staff employment costs, track access charges, ongoing maintenance and taxpayer funded subsidisation. Further, the State would still have to provide coach services to intermediate points as they are away from the rail line.

Considering the relatively small population base that would utilise the passenger rail service, the costs would be far in excess of any return from passenger revenue and this would place an additional burden on the Western Australian taxpayers.

For these reasons and considering other infrastructure development priorities and commitments being implemented by this Government, there has not been any feasibility study undertaken to determine the costs and benefits you have requested.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon O'Brien', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

SIMON O'BRIEN MLC
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT