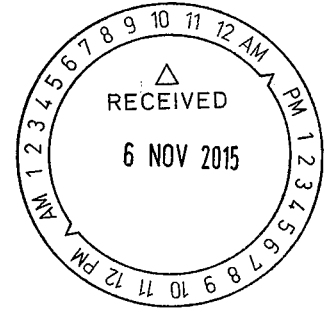




Minister for Transport

Our Ref : 53-10221



Hon S O'Brien, MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr O'Brien

I refer to your letter of 23 September 2015 seeking comment regarding petition No 93 – Perth Freight Link Project, submitted by Grainne O'Donovan and the Member for South Metropolitan Region, Hon Lynn MacLaren MLC.

The State Government is charged with the responsibility of ensuring Western Australia has the necessary transport infrastructure in place to meet current and future community needs.

The Perth Freight Link project (the Project) has undergone extensive planning over a lengthy period of time. The Project route consists of a number of major road corridors, most of which have been planned to support growth in the Perth Metropolitan area since the Metropolitan Region Scheme was first gazetted in 1963. The Project is best understood as a culmination of a number of pre-planned Projects, many of which were unfunded but considered essential to deliver the best outcome for Perth's strategic freight network.

The Project includes Roe 8 and The Fremantle Link (Section 2) which are fully funded strategic road projects that will help transform the road network in Perth's southern suburbs. Road safety will be significantly improved, transport costs for heavy vehicle operators will be reduced and freight efficiency and productivity enhanced as a result of vital improvements for freight access between Fremantle and the key inland industrial and commercial centres.

Together with the \$1 billion Gateway WA project and the \$1.12 billion Northlink WA project, Roe 8 and The Fremantle Link form a vital connection in the \$3.7 billion total Federal and State investment to provide a high standard 85 kilometre freight route from Muchea to Fremantle Port.

I would like to now take the opportunity to address the specific concerns raised in Petition No 93:

Decision Making and Transparency

Work on Perth's strategic freight network commenced with Roe Highway in the 1990's. Roe Highway stage 4 (Welshpool Road to Kenwick Link) opened in December 2002. Roe Highway stage 5 (Kenwick Link to Nicholson Road) opened in January 2003 and Roe Highway stage 6 (Nicholson Road to South Street) was opened in April 2004. Most recently, Roe Highway stage 7 (South Street to Kwinana Freeway) was opened in March 2006; and the preferred concept design for the Roe Highway Extension (Roe 8) was developed between 2009 – 2011. The progressive development of Roe Highway across numerous governments and over more than 15 years demonstrates the long term strategic plan for this essential freight corridor.

The Fremantle Link includes the previously known Leach Hwy (High Street) Upgrade Project which has been in the planning and development phase with Main Roads since 2011. During 2011-2014 numerous options were considered with stakeholders and the community. All of this work has been fed into The Fremantle Link process.

The Fremantle Link is currently in the procurement stage, with proponent contractors having submitted proposals for the base case route. In May 2015 Main Roads asked the shortlisted proponents to also examine innovative solutions for an alternative route for this part of the Project, including a tunnel option. The alternative proposals will be considered alongside the original base case proposal and against economic, social and environmental criteria.

In developing the Business Case, 20 strategic options were evaluated. As a result of the evaluation process, Roe 8 and The Fremantle Link base case (upgrades to Stock Road, Leach Highway, High Street and Stirling Highway, spanning 8.2 kilometres) were proposed as the most appropriate route.

The Executive Summary of the project Business Case is publicly available through the Main Roads website, outlining a clear rationale for the Project.

Packaging together numerous planned projects into one 85 kilometre freight route enabled the State Government to leverage the funding required to achieve a broader strategic outcome for Perth's freight network.

Environment

The impacts of Roe 8 and The Fremantle Link on the environment and local residents will be mitigated as much as possible. Examples of mitigation measures on Roe 8 include:

- Installation of noise walls along the alignment to reduce traffic noise and visual impacts;
- Utilising land already partly cleared for overhead power lines;
- Proposed purchasing of more than 400 hectares of native vegetation as an environmental offset to the 97.8 hectares of native vegetation that will be impacted;
- Implementing a Wetland Restoration Program at North Lake and Horse Paddock Swamp;

- Using a top-down construction approach at Roe Swamp Bridge to minimise clearing footprint and compaction during construction; and
- Constructing fauna underpasses through the alignment to maintain fauna connectivity.

In regards to air quality around the Perth Freight Link Project area, an air quality assessment was conducted using an internationally accepted air dispersion model that considered construction impacts and heavy vehicle use on Roe 8 up until 2031. The model predicted that heavy vehicle exhaust emissions would be well below background levels already present in the local atmosphere and below the National Environmental Protection Measure (NEPM) ambient air quality criteria. It is estimated that the Project will deliver savings in the vicinity of 450,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2031 as a result of the reduction in stop-start traffic.

Alternative Options

Main Roads has committed to exploring all route options for Perth Freight Link to deliver the best solution for road users, taxpayers and the local community.

In order to accommodate future heavy vehicle projections, simply upgrading Leach Highway (which was never designed to be a dedicated freight route to the Port of Fremantle), or placing the majority of freight on rail, are not long-term solutions for the community or the freight industry.

Fremantle's Inner Harbour is expected to operate as a working port into the long term. In the last decade, throughput at Fremantle Port Inner Harbour has increased by almost 70 per cent and the urban road network handles about 85 per cent of port container throughput.

A 2012 Fremantle Port Container Movement Study suggested that up to 70 per cent of the total number of containers moved within the Perth metropolitan area, are not suited to rail as their origins and destinations are not located far enough from the port, or close enough to rail loading points; leaving an approximate 30 per cent of containers suitable for rail. Currently approximately 14.2 per cent of containers are carried by rail, higher than any other Australian Port; and the State Government target is 30 per cent. With this in mind, both road and rail are required to service the Inner Harbour container transport.

In the future however, container facilities in both the inner and outer harbours will be required to service the growing needs of the State.

While providing a transport route to the Outer Harbour is seen as the alternative solution by some to the Perth Freight Link, when considering the future growth of Perth and the anticipated growth in container imports and exports over the next 10 years of approximately 5.5 per cent per annum, a dedicated freight route to Fremantle Port is considered essential.

The proposed Outer Harbour will take approximately 10 years of planning, including up to three years for environmental approvals. In the meantime, Roe 8 and The Fremantle Link of Perth Freight Link are needed to not only improve freight access to Fremantle's Inner Harbour, but also to serve the existing Kwinana Industrial Area and planned Outer Harbour into the future.

In short, both Roe 8 and The Fremantle Link of the Perth Freight Link project will in the long term provide significant benefits to the Perth metropolitan area with regard to road safety and freight transport efficiency.

Separate to the Perth Freight Link project is the question over the river crossing and the continued route leading into the Inner Harbour. Planning is underway regarding an upgrade to the Canning Highway / Stirling Highway intersection to improve capacity; and planning for a possible widening of the Stirling Bridge continues.

I trust the information provided has clarified this matter for you. The Committee's ongoing interest in this project is certainly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



**HON DEAN NALDER MLA
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**

05 NOV 2015