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Ms Margaret Liveris
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
GPO box A11
Perth WA 6837

To the Chair and Members,

Re: Petition No 93 – Perth Freight Link Project

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Committee with information for its preliminary investigations regarding the Perth Freight Link Project petition (the petition).

Let me begin by stating that the WA State Government has provided limited evidence and transparency around decision-making regarding this extremely costly project. In addition, there is no evidence that viable alternative proposals, such as the Outer Harbour, have been properly assessed or evaluated.

Please be aware that in addition to tabling this petition on behalf of my constituents, I have written (jointly with Senator Scott Ludlam) to the Premier to request that work on the Perth Freight Link proposal be suspended (both physical works and the awarding of contracts for physical works) until the alternative proposal to develop the Outer Harbour at Kwinana has been investigated.

Economic Concerns

Over \$1.6 billion dollars has been allocated to the Perth Freight Link, even though the Inner Harbour is expected to reach optimal capacity within 10 to 15 years. Prior to committing state and federal funds, there was no cost-benefit analysis or opportunity to scrutinise the WA government's claims that there is a 5:1 cost benefit for the new freight freeway, as the full version of the Perth Freight Link business case been not been released to the public.

Among many parliamentary questions I and others have asked regarding the costs of this project, I draw your attention to the following not atypical response from the Minister for Transport on 12 August 2015. I referred to the Minister's previous comment that "total state government contribution to the Perth Freight Link would be \$260 million" and I asked;

- (1) "Following lack of investor interest, the state government's contribution will now be at least \$650 million. From which part of the state budget has the extra \$390 million been raised, and with what impact on other areas of government expenditure?"
- (2) Given that the minister last month acknowledged the need for the link to extend across the Swan River if it is to reach port of Fremantle, from which part of the state budget will the further \$250 million or more required for a bridge be derived, and with what impact on other areas of government spending?"



At this time, I have received no response from the Minister, and the question was placed on notice.

In comparison, it has been reported in the *Keep WA Growing Report* that the Outer Harbour at Cockburn Sound, will create direct employment of 13,757 with expectation to reach 37,383 jobs. The estimated cost of the Outer Harbour and intermodal terminal is \$2.3 billion dollars, with \$740 billion in development unlocked and \$13.7 billion in economic activity enabled. This will generate new trade activity over 20 years between 2021 and 2041. Yet, the state government has not undertaken an investigation into the Outer Harbour as an alternative option to the Perth Freight Link.

Health Issues

The community is understandably concerned that an increase in pollution caused by trucks, known as diesel particulates, will occur if Roe 8 is built. Urban air pollution as a result of an increase of trucks on the road, can impact lung growth in children that worsens with long term exposure.

On the 19th August 2015, I asked a parliamentary question to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Transport asking him to table evidence to support statements that the project will reduce exhaust and CO2 emissions. I also asked if any modelling had been done to compare diesel particulate emissions if Perth Freight Link is built, compared to vehicle use of the existing road network.

A this time, I have received no response from the Minister; the question – along with many other questions asking for detail about the economics of the Perth Freight Link - was placed on notice. It is due to this ongoing dearth of detail that a Senate inquiry is currently underway.

Aboriginal Heritage

The proposed Roe 8 project area intersects several Aboriginal heritage sites registered under the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972, including site DAA3709, an ethnographic site encompassing North and Bibra Lakes, regarded as the birthplace of the Waugyl, a serpent of great spiritual significance to the Nyoongar people. Consent to disturb these sites under Sect18 of the Act was declined by the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee in February 2013 on the basis of the sites' significance and opposition expressed by Traditional Owners who had been surveyed by Main Roads. However, this decision was re-referred and overturned by the ACMC in June 2015 on highly dubious grounds. On the second occasion, consent was given without adequate site assessment (especially in relation to archaeological site DAA 4107) and despite continued opposition from the surveyed Traditional Owners and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. SWALSC was omitted from all heritage surveys relating to Roe 8 despite having been promoted by the Barnett Government as the main representative body for native title claimants in the Perth region.

Aboriginal chert artefacts found within the proposed Roe 8 project area are at least 5,000 years old and, given they mix with glass artefacts, demonstrate continuous use of the project area by Aboriginal people since a time that predates western civilisation. Neither the Minister nor the Department of Aboriginal Affairs have been able to show they adequately assessed the archaeological and ethnographic sites that will be destroyed forever by Roe 8. Nor has opposition by Traditional Owners, including SWALSC and surveyed informants, been heard.

Environment Issues

The Beeliar wetlands is a home to the Carnaby's Black Cockatoo, which has lost at least 50% of its habitat over 45 years. Other rare or endangered species threatened by Roe 8 include: Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Graceful Sun Moth, Lined Skink, Peregrine Falcon,

Spotless Crane, Buff-Banded Rail and King Spider Orchid¹. There are also nine distinct ecological communities on the site, including *Banksia attenuate* woodland which is listed as “Endangered” under the Federal Government’s Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Roe 8 will be constructed in the water catchment area for Bibra Lake, North Lake, the Beeliar swamps and other wetlands beyond. Cars and petrol will cause hydrocarbon and heavy metal contamination of roads². Additionally, the Roe 8 project would invade high-risk acid sulphate soil areas that when disturbed can become acidic – causing serious environmental and health impacts.

I draw your attention to the fact that an application for judicial review of the WA Environment Minister’s decision to approve the project was lodged with the WA Supreme Court on 10th September³.

We call for a Legislative Council Inquiry investigating the alternative proposal for an Outer Harbour development in comparison to the Perth Freight Link proposal. This issue has not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman). I have kept this submission brief, but would be happy to provide further information to the Committee.

Kind regards



Hon Lynn MacLaren MLC
Member for South Metropolitan Region

17 September 2015

¹ Save Beeliar Wetlands. *A Wetland worth Saving Factsheet*. Last Accessed on 16 September 2015 at <http://www.lynnmaclaren.org.au/sites/default/files/Roe%208%20Fact%20Sheet%201%20-%20WETLANDS%205%20July2011.pdf>

² Save Beeliar Wetlands. *The Threats – Roe 8 Highway Extension (stage 8)*. Last Accessed on 16 September 2015 from http://www.savebeeliarwetlands.com/wetlands/article/the_threats

³ Hunt Must Suspend Freight Link Assessment. 2015. Last Accessed on 16 September 2015 at <http://scott-ludlam.greensmps.org.au/content/media-releases/hunt-must-suspend-freight-link-assessment>