

ANGASTON RAILWAY STATION

4 June 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: Some concerned constituents—namely, Paul Henley, Trevor Langridge and Sandra Williams, who I name for the record for the tremendous work they do for rail in South Australia—recently forwarded to me some photographs of the disused Angaston railway station. These photographs are very concerning indeed because, first of all, they show this historic station in a state of absolute disrepair, completely covered in graffiti and with walls kicked in. Essentially, the place is dilapidated and has been vandalised. As a result, I have contacted the minister's office about the concerns and I was advised that the company GWA actually signed a 50-year lease in 1997 for the station. A term of the lease that the company signed provides:

...to the extent necessary to avoid nuisance to neighbouring properties, to safeguard public safety and to maintain the lessee's ability to conduct railway operations...keep the lessee's property clean and in good repair and condition...keep any buildings on the land clean and in good condition.

That is a direct quote from the agreement. Clearly, that level of care has not been undertaken by the company involved, and that is most concerning considering the historic nature of the site. Perhaps an even more concerning aspect is that survey markers are seen in the photographs. From further inquiry to the minister, it has become apparent that Eblen Subaru in Angaston has been granted authority by the department to construct a shed on part of the site of the Angaston railway station and that tracks leading to the rail turntable will be pulled up to make this happen. This will rule out the return of tourist steam locomotives to the station, as they require a turntable to operate. My questions to the minister are:

1. Will the government demand that GWA immediately repair the station in accordance with the lessee agreement it has signed, and revoke the authority granted to build over the station's rail lines?

2. When will the government revoke the lease to GWA over a rail line that it barely uses and allow significant numbers of tourists and commuters to again travel by train to the Barossa Valley—South Australia's most famous tourist destination?

3. Is this neglect of one of our most historic railway stations indicative of the government's attitude towards public transport in general in South Australia? This is at a time when New South Wales is pouring vast amounts of money into new rail lines (such as the North West Metro, Epping to Chatswood and the CBD lines) and Queensland is doing similar work, so why is South Australia also not doing this work?

4. Will the minister confirm or deny persistent rumours that, rather than encourage the use of public transport (like British Columbia has recently done in almost halving its public transport fares), he intends to announce a significant increase in the cost of a standard Metro ticket in the upcoming budget?

5. How does the government intend to meet its own Strategic Plan target, which calls for a near doubling of public transport usage, in the face of such continual deterioration of public transport and especially our rail network in South Australia?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Police, Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning):

This government has done more than any government for decades in relation to public transport. One only has to look out to the street in front of this building to see the tramline extension.

The Hon. D.W. Ridgway: Where does it go?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: The member interjecting over there was a party to that. The opposition's policy was to keep the trams (which were constructed in 1929) ending in Victoria Square. What would have happened if new trams had not been purchased and the tramline had not been upgraded and extended?

Inevitably, the Glenelg tramline would have closed down. That is the only possible outcome. You cannot run 1929 trams forever. Yet, all we have had is criticism from members opposite.

It is my understanding that the Angaston railway station has not been used for many years. The honourable member asked the question about what has occurred at the Angaston railway station. I cannot comment on that without in some way reflecting the government's policy towards public transport. If the government was spending money on maintaining every railway station that is no longer used within the state, we would not have a lot of money left to spend on upgrading public transport. I will refer the details of the contract which the honourable member raised—and I think they are, at least on the face of it, reasonable questions—to the Minister for Transport for a response.

In addition to the tramline upgrade, this government has, of course, in past budgets allocated significant amounts of money for upgrading the track. Part of the problem we have with our railway system is that the tracks are using sleepers which in some cases go back to the 1950s and before. There has been a gross underspending on public transport in this state for decades. So, this government is actually allocating significant amounts of money—tens, leading into hundreds, of millions of dollars—just on upgrading the tracks of our railway system which have been so badly neglected over previous decades.

This government has already set about the task of rebuilding our public transport system, but the priority has to be making it viable and not spending it on disused stations. Nonetheless, if contracts have been given to private parties for the use of stations, the question of whether those contracts are exercised is something that is worth considering, and I will certainly ensure that that matter is considered by the minister and bring back a reply.