

RAIL REVITALISATION

17 June 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: Two weeks ago the government announced a budget focused on public transport. Family First has acknowledged that public transport is a correct priority and has commended the government for this. Nevertheless, only one or two of the new residential areas outlined would be provided with rail coverage additional to that which already exists, that is, the suburb of Semaphore and the areas immediately surrounding AAMI stadium and the entertainment centre. The AAMI stadium and entertainment centre stops seem primarily designed to bring people to entertainment areas rather than for everyday commuting. Electrification of the line, while needed and not criticised, does nothing to actually increase rail coverage, as it only provides a marginally faster service.

Alternatively, \$648.4 million could have been spent on restoring passenger rail services to the Barossa on the already existing limestone freight line, vastly increasing the number of people with access to the city by rail; converting the Belair to Mount Barker line to dual gauge; and reopening the Adelaide Hills and Mount Barker line. There would also have been money left over in this proposal to rebuild the southern suburbs rail line through Sheidow Park, Reynella, Morphett Vale and Hackham, crossing over the old Onkaparinga River bridge to Seaford. I note that, although that line was ripped up in 1972, the old corridor and bridges remain in place.

For the same amount of money as spent on this project for a complicated dual rail/tram service to some entertainment venues, rail coverage could have been provided to vast numbers of South Australians. My questions are:

1. As a result of these announcements, what percentage of South Australians will now have access to rail for everyday commuting who did not previously have such access?

2. Will the minister confirm whether the Belair line will be converted to standard gauge and, as such, will it link up with the ARTC line from Belair to Mount Barker?

3. Will Mount Barker and Adelaide Hills residents therefore see rail returned and themselves have access to rail facilities?

4. When will the Barossa line be returned?

5. When will the Seaford rail line be returned?

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

I do not think the honourable member took the point I made earlier that one of the reasons for electrification of our rail system (and it is extremely expensive, as we have to first resleeper and then electrify the line) and one of the reasons we need to put this \$2 billion into first getting the current system up to the standard that exists in probably every other capital city in the country is to make it attractive for people to live in those areas. In fact we are trying, as I indicated in the earlier question, for about 70 per cent of our new infill development in those regions to be along the transport corridors, which will use them much more effectively. Rather than—

The Hon. D.W. Ridgway: Why did you wait six years?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: The only transport policy I remember happening under the Liberal government between 1993 and 2002 was the building of a one-way road down to Noarlunga and the privatisation of the buses. During those six years there was virtually no expenditure on any of the infrastructure in this state. The rail system was totally run down under the previous government.

This government is putting hundreds of millions of dollars into revitalising our public transport network. This is what we have to do. Members opposite opposed the extension of the tramway and still do. Members should understand what would have happened. If we still had trams built in 1929,

without any investment made on the tramline, that tramline would have had to close. The inevitable outcome of their policy would have been the closure of the Glenelg tramline, because it just would not have been sensible to upgrade that line. Why would you upgrade the rolling stock on that line when it ended halfway through the city? The record of members opposite on public transport is appalling.

The honourable member asks why we do not extend it. If we had extended the system before we upgraded it, that would have been a far worse outcome for the people of this state. The honourable member talks about the rail line to the hills. I can remember how long the old rail service used to take to get to Bridgewater: an hour and 10 minutes. How many people would take the train to Bridgewater? The number of people who would be served by the line the honourable member is suggesting is relatively small.

We need to make our city more efficient and concentrate future development around our transport corridors and make them more attractive. The number of people we will accommodate will be far greater than just extending the rail service indefinitely to the outer fringes with a much inferior service. Electrification will enable more trains to run: they will be quicker, smoother and quieter, and it will greatly improve the system.

I can understand the honourable member's aspiration that we should extend services and I am sure that will come, but we have to get our transport system up to the level that every other major capital city has. I notice that the electrification of the rail lines in Brisbane was funded by the Whitlam government, and much of the development in Perth was funded under the Better Cities Program. They were lucky to get that money just before the change of federal government back in the 1990s.

It is important that we make sure that we get the best value with our base system and we can then look to extending that system. I am sure that will come once the current round of investment is completed, but it will take a long time to make up for the lack of investment in our public transport system over many decades.