

BAROSSA RAILWAY

19 June 2008

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: The transport minister has expressed opposition on a number of occasions to passenger rail services resuming to the Barossa Valley. Indeed, I have a letter signed by the minister dated 26 May this year, which states:

I am advised by the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure that the Barossa Valley does not meet basic patronage criteria to justify investment. Traffic planning studies have repeatedly shown that there is not sufficient demand for regular passenger transport into Adelaide.

Despite this, I have in my possession an internal TransAdelaide study regarding passenger trains to the Barossa that speaks in very glowing terms of the idea. The proposal, entitled 'TransAdelaide Proposal for an Adelaide to Tanunda Metroticket Train Service', proposes that a 'metroticket train service operate Sunday to Saturday inclusive'. It also makes the following points:

'TransAdelaide has researched the provision of such a service and identified that the service will:

- 1.be environmentally sustainable and provide social inclusion to the Barossa region;
- 2.generate increasing and sustainable economic job growth;
- 3.reduce inequality of opportunities currently in place between the Barossa region and metropolitan Adelaide;
- 4.provide better access to important services such as health and education;
- 5.promote innovation and creativity by extending the current Metroticket service to the Barossa region;
- 6.extend further opportunities to South Australians in the Barossa region.'

Further, such a project would align closely to the State Strategic Plan, according to the report and it would also see a 'flow on effect to the tourism industry'.

I note a recent newspaper article complaining that high petrol prices were seeing an end to day trips to the Barossa and the other tourist areas surrounding it, so a train service would definitely do something to rescue the Barossa tourist industry. My questions are:

1. Does the minister agree that his statements claiming no benefit in rail services returning to the Barossa are actually in conflict with the report from his own department?
2. If not, will the minister release the studies that he claims show that there is no benefit in resuming Barossa rail services?
3. Will the minister confirm whether his department or GWA are planning to actually demolish one of the historic railway stations on the Barossa line, and that is the Nuriootpa station?

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Police, Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning): I will refer that question to my colleague the Minister for Transport but, again, I make the point that the current rail system in this state is totally antiquated, and there has been massive under-investment over many years. Some of the sleepers on the lines, so I am told, go back to the 1950s.

The first thing that has to be done to provide this city with a viable rail service—and this is the point made by my colleague the Minister for Transport—is that it has to be resleepered. All of our lines have to be resleepered. Secondly, of course, they need electrification for the reasons I gave yesterday. In those outer areas around the Barossa and the like, under the planning review recommendations, about 30 per cent of the city's new dwellings will be in greenfield development and the other 70 per cent will

come from various forms of infill from high-rise in the city and more dense development along transport corridors.

So that is where the bulk of the new dwellings will be provided. As I understand it the line that now goes out to the Angaston Quarry, I think Penrice use it; it is used once or twice a day. It is clearly not suitable; it is not up to the standards required for a passenger railway. For a length of railway that line to serve a couple of towns with a few thousand people it would require a massive investment.

As it is, this government is putting in nearly \$2 billion over the next decade to upgrade our rail system and try to get it up to scratch, and that begins with concrete sleepers on the existing rail line and then of course electrification. If one were to give priority to try to extend services now, what would happen is that the whole system would gum up once you got closer to Adelaide, because the system would not cope with it. As it is now, there are problems on our rail service, because the under investment on the track for so many years, for so many decades has meant—

The Hon. J.S.L. Dawkins interjecting:

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: And the rolling stock is antiquated; yes, exactly, and that has to be replaced.

Perhaps honourable members might think for a moment how we would go trying to replace broad gauge diesel rail cars, and the answer would be that it would be very hard. One of the benefits of the electrification, as I understand it, is that it will be much easier to purchase rolling stock, because the fact is that most modern urban rail transit is electrified. There would be very few diesel systems left in the world. We are probably one of the few places that has one.

That is why that investment has to be made, and that is why I fully support my colleague the Minister for Transport in his efforts to upgrade the transport system. It is just a tragedy that some of this investment was not made years

ago. We have had the Leader of the Opposition in another place going out saying, 'This is too late.' Well, where was he? Where was Mr Hamilton Smith? He was a member of a government before the last election. Where was its investment in public transport?

In the past six years, until this government announced these benefits in its last budget, all he has done in public transport, and the only words you will find attributable to him, is criticism of the tramline extension. That is his only contribution to the public transport debate in the previous six years.

I appreciate the honourable members concerns—

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Mr Dawkins might contain his excitement.

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: The Hon. Dennis Hood asked a question voicing concerns in relation to this.

What the government has to do is provide the priority. We have to ensure that every dollar we spend on our public transport system, given the massive underinvestment over so many years, provides the best return to the public. Given that in-fill and high-density development in established areas will provide 60 to 70 per cent of new dwellings in the city, it makes good economic sense to ensure that that gets priority. Obviously, in the future one would hope that, once the electrification of the line to Gawler is completed—

The Hon. J.S.L. Dawkins interjecting:

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: Something has to be first, and something has to be last. Your leader in the other place is saying that we should extend the rail line south. That is his policy. If you do that—

The Hon. J.S.L. Dawkins interjecting:

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY: Let's just think about this. This government is spending \$2 billion on rail investment, on electrification. What the member

opposite is saying is that we should be doing the north first, but his leader is saying that we should be spending hundreds of millions of dollars (because that is what it will cost) on extending the line to Seaford. If you spend there, you cannot spend somewhere else.

Members opposite can argue about their priorities, but what they cannot say is that they will do everything at once, because that does not add up—and the public of this state know that it does not add up. I think that the Hon. Mr Dawkins should talk to the Leader of the Opposition in another place and work out exactly what their transport priorities are.