

ORCHID PARK BUS STOP

Grievance

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [9.37 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Transport, and I thank the minister for taking this grievance. I will not take the full seven minutes, because it is —

Mr T.R. Buswell: I didn't have a choice!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: At least he is here, compared with some ministers. This issue will not take the full seven minutes; it is a pretty simple issue. It is about the removal of a bus stop that serviced the area of Orchid Park. Orchid Park is an area in north Beechboro that is disconnected from the rest of Beechboro by Reid Highway and also a bit by Beechboro Road.

Just to give members some insight, over recent years Beechboro Road has become very busy, particularly with the extension of Hepburn Avenue to connect with Beechboro Road. A lot of traffic uses Beechboro Road. I am talking about not just residential traffic; there is also a lot of heavy traffic, such as trucks servicing the significant housing development along the Lord Street corridor. Beechboro Road North in particular has become very busy as trucks use it constantly and there is also a large amount of residential traffic as the Bennett Springs estate has developed and as more people move into Lord Street corridor and further into Ellenbrook. A lot of people use Beechboro Road North to avoid the Lord Street–Reid Highway intersection. I am painting the picture that Beechboro Road is currently a very busy road.

Last November, Mabel contacted my office complaining about the overnight removal of the community's local bus stop. As I understand it, the bus stop was removed either late October or early November. The local residents whom I met with on a number of occasions told me that it was removed with little or no consultation. There possibly could have been a sign, but no-one pointed them to that sign. They did not know that this bus stop was being removed. As it was described to me, they rocked up one day, went to catch the bus, and the bus just drove straight past. They did not really know why that had happened. They tried it again, and the bus kept driving right past, and then they realised that someone had removed the bus stop.

To me that just seems like a pretty harsh thing to do in the middle of summer—removing a bus stop and having these poor residents standing on the side of the road, thinking that bus would stop, while it just went straight past. That was number one.

Mr T.R. Buswell: When was it removed?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My office was contacted the first week of November.

Mr T.R. Buswell: That is not the middle of summer, though.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is relatively hot.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will get the average temperature for the minister, but it was still pretty hot. The bus stop was removed, and, as I said, the residents were standing there but no bus came. One of the residents told me that they had contacted the Perth Transport Authority and the bus stop was reinstated for a day and then disappeared again. I think the process for the removal of this bus stop needs to be assessed.

The bus stop was established in 2000 after a former member for Ballajura, Rhonda Parker, was lobbied by the residents. As I said, it services the suburb of Orchid Park. There is no primary school in that area, but facilities in Morley such as doctors' surgeries, Centrelink and other offices need to be accessed and that is what that bus enables. The removal of the bus stop has an impact on elderly people living in the area and a lot of the young kids, including school kids, who live in that area. A lot of first home buyers are moving into the area. Orchid Park is an older suburb but it is attracting a lot of new families into the area due to the more affordable housing there. As a result, kids who were able to walk to the bus stop now need to be escorted by their parents across busy Beechboro Road North. The distance is not the issue; it is the fact that they must cross major roads.

I think this is one of those areas on which a commonsense solution can be reached. Basically, we are asking for the reinstatement of that bus stop at either its previous location or a bit further south towards Reid Highway. The letter from the minister's chief of staff states that there are engineering guidelines regarding the proximity of the existing bus stop to the roundabout that has been installed there. Firstly, I think a bus bay could be built at the location of the previous bus stop. There was not previously a dedicated bus bay there, although there is a lot of room for one. An issue I have noticed around the metropolitan area is the number of bus bays that buses do not properly fit into. I do not understand that. However, on this issue, why can there not be a bus bay for the buses to pull into, which would address some of the safety issues, particularly traffic hold-ups north of Reid Highway? I ask the minister to investigate that. The other option, which was considered by the minister's department, was

the establishment of a bus stop closer to Reid Highway, south of the existing highway and still west of Beechboro Road. That would address the engineering concerns I understand the PTA has with the former siting of the bus stop. I think that would be a good solution because we want a bus stop re-sited west of Beechboro Road to serve the Orchid Park residents. It would remove the need for them to cross the four-lane highway. Although the minister's chief of staff indicated that a "pedestrian refuge" is provided at the roundabout, it is not an access way; it is where the kerb has been adjusted so that people can cross the road. It is a very, very heavy intersection. I cannot emphasise the high volume of trucks and cars that use that road continuously. The whole area has been built up significantly over recent years, and that build-up will continue as development increases.

I am using my seven minutes! I seriously believe that this is an issue that can be resolved. It is one of those decisions that was made without proper consultation and I think an option can be suggested by the minister's department that would help those residents and give them back something that is pretty basic—a bus stop they can easily walk to and where their kids can catch a bus to school. Thank you.

MR T.R. BUSWELL (Vasse — Minister for Transport) [9.43 am]: I thank the member for raising this and for bringing in a coloured map—coloured by dint of a red dot on it!—to supplement my black and white maps. Obviously, for the residents of the area it is an important issue. I will go through some of the technical reasons the bus stop was removed. My advice is that there was no clandestine late-night operation to remove it. I do not think the PTA operates like that. I cannot imagine that it has a team that swoops on bus stops in the dead of night! I understand some signage was placed at the location of the bus stop prior to its removal. Why was it removed? As the member pointed out, the intersection of Orchid Avenue and Beechboro Road North has become very busy; it now has a roundabout. Once a roundabout is in place, unfortunately, there has to be some separation between the roundabout and where the bus can stop, according to a formula the PTA applies.

I hope that is not Mabel on the phone, member! The PTA looked for what it thought would be a suitable replacement bus stop and placed one around the corner in Bennett Springs. As the member for West Swan pointed out, the separation formula that applies to the bus stop means it is possible to locate a bus stop on the west side of Beechboro Road North, a little closer towards Reid Highway. That means, as the member pointed out, for those residents to at least catch the bus in that direction, they will not have to cross Beechboro Road North. Her advice to me is even though that is probably further to walk —

Ms R. Saffioti: I don't think it is. We have done our measurements.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Her view is that it is not. The department's people who paced out the distance might have shorter or longer legs! Who knows? I am happy to look at it. I do not see it as a major issue. If the residents are happy to accept that, for safety reasons, the bus stop needs to be a little further away from the roundabout than it was previously and some have to walk a little further to the existing stop in Bennett Springs Drive, while others do not, I am very happy to ask the PTA to look at moving that bus stop back to what would be, effectively, the western side of Beechboro Road North.

Ms R. Saffioti: Yes, near the Bosnian centre's turning lane.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: Yes. If the residents are happy with that, I am sure the PTA will review its decision and look to relocating that bus stop. I do not think I have to say any more than that. I appreciate the member bringing the matter to the Parliament. In my view it is a good use of the grievance process and I am happy to help out.