

# Transport strategy key to successful growth

■ Diana Ryan

**S**weeping election promises are being made about public transport. Now all we need to know is what will work and who is more likely to deliver on it.

The Barnett Government set in motion a package designed to increase public transport patronage significantly.

Sinking the Fremantle Rail Line under Northbridge will enable transit-oriented living and working for 16,000 people. The Joondalup Line extension to Butler is under way, and talks with Infrastructure Australia continue over building Perth's first light rail.

In 2011, the Barnett Government funded the biggest increase in bus kilometres and buses in 15 years, and 51 new railcars will arrive this year. Train station upgrades continued, and thousands more parking bays were added. Free transport for pensioners, first raised as a 2008 election promise by the Carpenter Government, has been successful.

Ellenbrook will receive the the first infrastructure-supported Bus Rapid Transit system.

Yet problems remain. For all the politics of parking at train stations, commuters take most of the bays, making it difficult for others to access trains between peaks.

The WA Taxi Council is seeking an exemption from the Australian Human Rights Commission, so as not to have to provide taxi services for people with disabilities in the same timeframe that others expect to utilise. MetroNet — Labor's promise to connect Perth suburbs by rail — will struggle to recreate its past rail-building record.

The Mandurah rail line and other rail works were achieved on the back of proceeds from the first boom, before the global financial crisis, Royalties for Regions scheme and the decline in WA's share of GST.



**Projects: A new electric railcar.**

MetroNet wouldn't be brought in earlier than the Barnett Government's public transport master plan, and prioritising Ellenbrook would rapidly drain funds.

And it is unlikely this project will attract the endorsement of key Federal Government departments such as Infrastructure Australia. Labor was wary of private-public partnerships, when today's rail projects are about business cases, with private contributions highly regarded.

So how do we fund billion-dollar rail projects from now on?

It's difficult to see how the public can avoid congestion taxes and higher parking fees for ever.

Greater Perth has 1.1 million private motor vehicles and about 3.5 million off-street parking bays to cater for them. With another 400,000 vehicles expected by 2020, it will be impossible to keep up with demand.

Taxes and charges distribute cars more effectively by influencing the time of day drivers take to the roads, and ensure efficient turnover of car bays at key locations like hospitals, major shopping centres and universities.

These fees can be used to pay for public transport. As the public begins to experience more of the user-pay principle, we should expect business to play its part in securing mass transit

options. The Public Transport Authority identified the biggest increase in public transport usage will come from the north-west, and one reason is the intent to extend the Joondalup Line to Yanchep.

The final three stations on that line will be framed by some impressive new developments.

At Yanchep-Two Rocks a big private estate is being developed by Tokyu Corporation.

At 7550ha, the site will cater for 155,000 people and 55,000 jobs at multiple industrial and technology parks.

The rail line will terminate at its heart.

Delfin Lend Lease successfully lobbied the Victorian Government to extend Melbourne beyond its growth boundaries to create a "green mega-suburb" called Lockerbie.

The proposal was enhanced by offering to pay for a bus network and rail station.

Lend Lease is now developing homes for 50,000 people at Alkimos and Satterley Property Group is developing Eglinton.

Crown Perth is not in the business of building football stadiums but may make money providing parking for one.

This in turn could contribute towards a light rail spur to bring tourists directly to its complex.

Finally, there is the Knowledge Arc, a project in which the Committee for Perth has a lead with its light rail stakeholder group.

Both Curtin University and the University of WA have been offered the sought-after option of a light rail terminating within their campuses.

Neither can expect to continue with the usual allocation of car parking as they develop, and buses will not meet their needs permanently.

However, both can expect this particular light rail option to take on a higher priority if they are willing to contribute to its cost.

**Diana Ryan is a public transport researcher and a contributor to the Knowledge Arc project.**