



The West Australian

State Politics WA News

Don't count on it: "Side deal" for WA roads revealed after Federal Budget that forgot WA



Jessica Page The West Australian

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Jessica Page



Deputy Premier and Transport Minister Rita Saffioti outside Dumas House. Credit: Andrew Ritchie/The West Australian

- A secret stash of \$642 million for WA roads after 2029 has been described as a suspicious "side deal" after the State missed out on funding in the Federal Budget.
- Rita Saffioti has vowed to use a letter from Federal Infrastructure Minister Catherine King – promising the top-up "post 2029", after two more Federal elections – to fight for projects but confirmed WA's funding has been slashed over the forward estimates.

"But we got clarification by the Federal minister that there's also a provision of \$642.5 million for new initiatives . . . so we're very confident that as we move forward we'll continue to have new projects," the WA treasurer said.

She refused to say whether she was disappointed with what was in the Budget books.

"We've got a lot of projects to get on with," Ms Saffioti said.

A Kwinana Freeway upgrade and a Leach Highway overpass, that were both previously announced, amounted to just 2 per cent of Treasurer Jim Chalmers' \$17 billion dollar Budget spend on new roads and rail.

The Budget papers revealed that WA was the only State with road funding being slashed across the forward estimates, while every other State and Territory was getting more.

"The East Coast Albanese Government has been short-changing Western Australians for a long time and this is the latest example," Shadow Infrastructure Minister Bridget McKenzie said.

"The Budget papers actually say Western Australians are getting \$272.1 million cut in their infrastructure budget over the next four years. That's on Budget paper three, page 69, in black and white.

"Now we've got the Federal Minister, Catherine King, trying to assure WA that there's some side deal. But that is not in last night's budget.

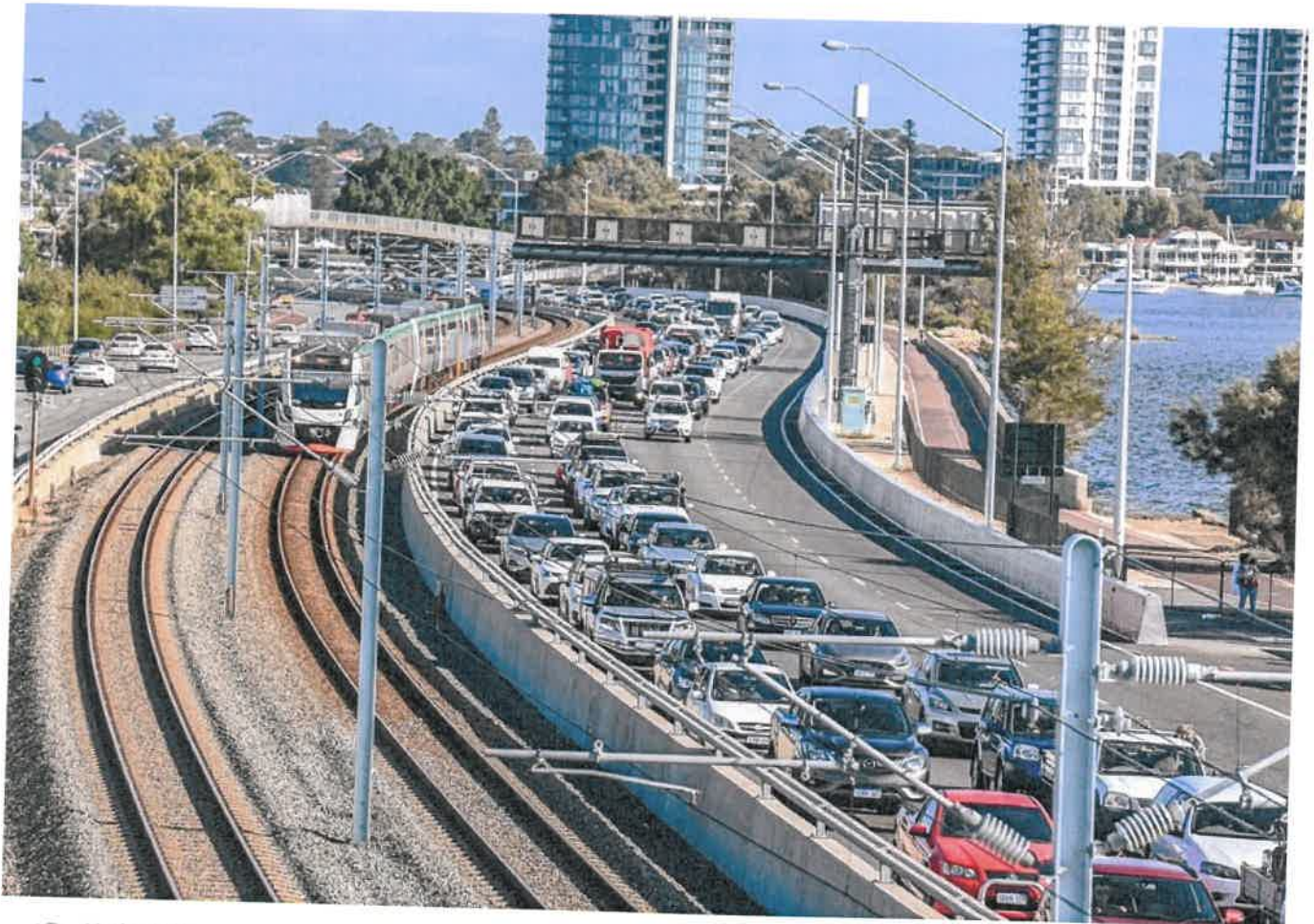
"Rita Saffioti needs to be very wary of taking this Government's word."

The West Australian understands that the letter emailed to Ms Saffioti on Budget night blamed the State election caretaker period for making it harder to assess funding proposals before the Budget's deadline.

"As WA was in Caretaker during the Budget development, we provisioned \$650 million for future priorities in WA and we look forward to working with the State Government on these," Ms King said on Wednesday.

"We have a 10-year program for infrastructure and typically each states' funding fluctuates from year to year as projects roll on and off.

"This years' budget sees the bulk of the Metronet coming to completion, which means project payments go down."



📷 Kwinana Freeway upgrade and a Leach Highway overpass were previously announced. Credit: Iain



CRIME

Nearly 500 WA drivers caught speeding in two-day crackdown

Jessica Evensen

The "post 2029" provision leaves the \$500 million upgrade of the Erindale Road - Reid Highway black spot in limbo, with the State Government's election promise contingent on the Commonwealth paying half.

"We'll start the detailed planning," Ms Saffioti said. "This is a continuing discussion."

Asked whether the project could stall or be left unfinished without Commonwealth funding, Ms Saffioti vowed that Perth drivers would "get a full road".

"Federal Labor have the ability to make election commitments, just like we did," she said.

WA recorded its highest road toll since 2016 last year, with 188 lives lost.

RAC general manager Will Golsby said road safety must get "urgent" attention during the upcoming Federal election campaign.

"It is concerning this week's Federal Budget appears to show a sharp decline in funding," he said.

"Regional WA, which is vastly over-represented in road deaths needs urgent focus."



RANKING