

Decision to commit funding to the Perth Freight Link project

On Wednesday night Sept 2 I attended a meeting of concerned East Fremantle residents to try to understand the implications of the Perth Freight Link on our part of the world.

There is no doubt that this is a project that is being retro fitted on to an aging Port that is reaching its limit. This is at a time when cities around the world are moving their Ports and refitting them to accommodate inner city living and tourism.

The sinking of the railway in Perth has shown how creative thinking around transport and infrastructure can have economic benefits for all.

Our Port could clearly be a mix of both.

The changing demographic of the inner city has not been recognised or respected.

Main Roads press advertisements extoling the benefits of the PFL are gratuitous and demeaning.

Much more information by way of disclosure of the social and environmental impact needs to occur.

Main Roads WA must be accountable and open, they need to attend public meetings and fully explain their long and short term planning. I.e. What are the plans for the traffic routes, Leach Highway or a tunnel under White Gum Valley and Hamilton Hill? What happens when the road comes to end at Marmion Street? What will happen to traffic while it is being built? Is Canning Highway and Stock road the alternative route for up to 4 years of construction? How long will construction take?

How will the bridge cope? Is it 2 or 3 bridges or double-decker or a tunnel? (The wooden bridge certainly won't manage to sustain the extra traffic.)

These and many other questions will have answers that needed now.

There is a groundswell of concern and anxiety that will have long lasting political consequences. The scar that it will leave on the community will be a reminder forever. Every trip to school, every shopping expedition, every day by the river or visit to Fremantle will be a reminder of what has been inflicted on our community. North Fremantle will become an enclave, a hostage to the port and industry and shortsighted government thinking.

The long term health consequences of noise and pollutants are known and obvious and no matter what is said to contrary the mixing of cars and trucks will inevitably result in more accidents. As an example, the use of cars and buses to transport children from the south of the bridge to the schools in the western suburbs will become a navigational hazard as it will for all commuters.

It is hard to think that this isn't an episode of the ABC's Utopia if it wasn't so serious.

The tenderers need to be aware that the whole process will be subject to community challenge and as was the case with the East West link in Victoria the political process can bring them undone.

If industry can build ports to export our resources and we can build Sports and Entertainment stadia, Elizabeth Quay, Fiona Stanley Hospital and sink the rail line surely it is within our capacity to build the outer harbour and start now and save our communities from this expedient, opportunistic imposition.

Tony Jones