

## TRANSPORT RETHINK

# Now it's buses ... not light rail

**Gareth Parker**

State Political Editor

Transport Minister Dean Nalder is weighing up whether to use buses instead of trams along the proposed MAX light rail alignment in Perth's northern suburbs.

With the \$2 billion MAX project shelved indefinitely because of Budget constraints — despite it being promised by the Barnett Government at the last State election — high-capacity buses and dedicated bus lanes could be a more affordable solution.

MAX was proposed by former transport minister Troy Buswell as a “transformative” project that would link Mirrabooka to the city via arterial roads including Dianella Drive, Morley Drive, Alexander Drive and Fitzgerald Street by 2018.

The project was shelved in the December 2013 mid-year review and the Government has said it will make no decision about whether to proceed with MAX before the next election, due in March 2017.

Since then the State has lost its AAA credit rating and the price

of iron ore has halved, punching at least a \$5 billion hole in Government revenues.

With funds tight, sources said Mr Nalder was examining whether buses in dedicated lanes could do the job instead.

Though Mr Nalder and Premier Colin Barnett refused to comment yesterday, the Transport Minister told Parliament late last year that more frequent bus services on a more direct route from Morley Galleria to the city lifted patronage 25 per cent.

“If we can provide more direct routes, instead of having buses that wind their way through the community to get to a destination point, and if we can get buses moving along major arterial routes on a more regular basis, can we get increased levels of patronage,” Mr Nalder said.

“We have increased bus passenger numbers on Scarborough Beach Road and I am looking at other sites.

“I want further analysis around this space because it is an existing infrastructure that we are starting to think about in a smarter way to shift people across the State.”

Shadow transport minister Ken Travers said consideration of buses rather than light rail was “another sign of the complete dysfunction and chaos in this Government”.

“We’ve now been waiting almost four years for their public transport master plan and they’re still chopping and changing ideas on a daily basis,” he said.

“Rather than basing decisions on sound policy and what will give the greatest benefit for the cost, it all seems to be done on the whim of the minister of the day.”

**Weekend West**

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