

Nalder calls for toll debate

Joe
Spagnolo
POLITICAL
EDITOR



PERTH'S traffic problems mean a debate will be needed on the introduction of toll roads, Transport Minister Dean Nalder says.

While the Barnett Government has ruled out charging everyday motorists to use roads, Mr Nalder said the measure "had to be debated in the future". He said governments had to be more "innovative" as Perth continued to grow and access to cash became increasingly tough because of rising debt levels.

The comments come after an Infrastructure Australia audit this week warned Perth would overtake Sydney as the nation's most traffic-congested city by 2031.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry, WA's peak business body, yesterday said governments could not be relied on to continue funding infrastructure and "user pays" should be considered.

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New look at toll roads

JOE SPAGNOLO

TRANSPORT Minister Dean Nalder has reignited the debate on toll roads in WA, saying it was an option the cash-strapped state had to consider in the future.

Giving the clearest indication yet that Perth could follow the lead of other capital cities, such as Sydney, and introduce toll roads for everyday motorists, Mr Nalder said tolls were “one of the elements that had to be debated in the future”.

“For the immediate term, and the foreseeable future, we won’t be introducing (toll roads),” Mr Nalder told *The Sunday Times* yesterday.

“However, what I will acknowledge is that due to increasing pressures and a growing city, the increasing pressures on infrastructure and the difficulties of accessing capital by governments because of debt levels, that

there will need to be more innovative approaches as to how we access capital.”

Mr Nalder spoke after arriving back in Perth from a meeting with state transport ministers, Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss and Infrastructure Australia, which on Friday forecast Perth would overtake Sydney as the nation’s most congested city.

By 2031, the Mitchell Fwy would cost \$10.03 million a lane kilometre in lost productivity through time delay, the audit estimated.

Tonkin Highway and the Graham Farmer Fwy-Orrong Rd and Marmion Ave-West Coast Hwy corridors, were also identified as becoming the nation’s most traffic-clogged roads in 16 years.

Mr Nalder said Infrastructure Australia’s population growth projections for WA

were more “bullish” than the state’s own projections.

“Nonetheless, it aligns to the work we are undertaking for people and freight movement for populations of 2.7 million, 3.5 million and 5 million people,” he said.

The Barnett Government has already begun tinkering with toll roads, with a road user charge planned for truck drivers along the proposed \$1.57 billion Perth Freight Link.

Mr Nalder said it was possible the Government could eventually sell off the revenue stream from tolls to a private investor.

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