

Adjournment Melbourne Airport rail link

Mr DAVIS
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MELBOURNE AIRPORT RAIL LINK

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (19:12): My matter for the adjournment tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and it concerns a letter I am in possession of from the CEO of the Committee for Ballarat, Michael Poulton, who has recently written to Minister Allan regarding the Melbourne Airport rail link. It is a very carefully structured and thoughtful letter that lays out the concerns of his organisation, the Committee for Ballarat, and a number of other organisations across the state—regional city and metropolitan organisations—that are concerned about the direction that the state government is taking.

It is worth quoting and I think putting on the record some of his thoughtful comments. He said in the letter:

Of the solutions currently on the table, the tunnel is the only one that enables the greater capacity at the Southern Cross Station end of the line, required to meet the needs of Melbourne's western suburbs, airport travellers and importantly the growth of Regional Victoria.

In our recent discussion, it was reiterated the State Government was investigating alternative solutions and that these solutions were confidential. The media speculation regarding the MM1 as the solution for MARL does not deliver on the full scope of the project we discussed. The multi-billion dollar commitment from IFM and the Federal Government remains the only solution, currently publicly available, that delivers for all Victorians.

Indeed Mr Poulton went on to say:

The cost of not investing in the infrastructure that can bust congestion and preserve our liveability, will be far greater than the cost of building a faster, high-capacity and high service-frequency rail system, including to Victoria's premier regional cities.

And I agree with him on that matter of the regional cities, which need the fast rail and indeed need rail to help decentralise some of Victoria's very significant population growth. That is in Melbourne's interests as well as in the interests of regional cities. He said:

This project is a once in a generation opportunity to provide a world class designated rail link to the airport, to transform western suburbs rail services, enable significant regional growth and ease population pressure in Melbourne.

Victoria is at a juncture where it must make one of the most consequential infrastructure decisions for many decades. We urge the State Government to make a decision on the MARL that includes the provision for a tunnel.

I therefore ask the Minister for Transport Infrastructure—the action I seek—that she now abandon her ill-considered and short-sighted plans to run airport trains through the Metro Tunnel, negatively impacting Geelong, Melton, Wyndham Vale, Sunbury and Ballarat commuters, and instead accept this sound and considered advice and build a new dedicated tunnel for the Melbourne Airport rail link.