

"The West Australian", p 67

27 July 2018

Mines and towns

Everyone likes to see investment in renewable energy technology and the commodities that underpin that success, (*WestBusiness*, 25/7).

But care needs to be taken to ensure that development does not ruin the lives of those close to mine development.

Mine expansion at Greenbushes will put trucks carrying 1.95 million tonnes per annum of spodumene concentrate on to South Western Highway. This might involve 267 truck movements a day, or one every two minutes on a 10-hour schedule.

Such heavy traffic, with existing logging and horticulture transport, will destroy towns like Balingup, Kirup, Donnybrook and Boyanup.

Lithium concentrate sells for more than \$1200 a tonne. With \$45 million worth of product per week moving along roads to processing plants and ports, there is surely enough money available to recondition the existing rail network, keeping South West towns and roads safe for inhabitants.

Peter Strachan, Southampton

Reactivate State rail

Peter Strachan makes sense when he advocates using rail transport for moving the lithium concentrate from the expanded mines at Greenbushes (*Letters*, 27/7).

The South West Highway south of Donnybrook is a road that winds up and down and around hills. It is not a road that lends itself to heavy transport, let alone traffic of the volume that Mr Strachan quotes.

The cost of reopening the existing railway lines would be offset by the savings in road maintenance, the building of overtaking lanes and the saving of lives when frustrated drivers attempt to overtake the slow-moving trucks in areas that are not suitable. There are plenty who will try it.

Apart from lithium, the rail lines could also carry wood chips, logs, containers and all manner of other freight, thereby leaving the roads free for local users and tourists.

Some flat-bed trucks these days are equipped with cranes to load and unload containers. Why not equip some flat-bed rail wagons in the same way?

Why were grain silos constructed at railway stations and sidings? Because the movement of grain by rail makes far more sense than using hundreds of trucks on roads that need constant repair.

Imagine the state of the roads in the Pilbara, and the cost of repairing them, if all iron ore had been carted by road since the start of mining in that part of the State.

Let us find a government with the intelligence to reactivate and use the State's rail network.

Peter Baker, Binningup

Lithium mine transport issue

From the outset may I say the expansion to the Greenbushes lithium mine and a processing plant at Kemberton is fantastic news for Bunbury and the South West, putting the district even more firmly on the map. Being a major player in sustainable energy supply will ensure employment for future generations simply because we have the rare and essential product.

There is one sticking point however, the Greenbushes railway sidestepped thus far, was closed in 2004 by then Labor minister Alannah MacTiernan for maintenance and never reopened. If it's not utilised,

residents of Greenbushes and other towns en route, will be sharing the highway with 200 road trains transporting the product to Bunbury. A daunting task for anyone commuting, including the road transport industry.

That's 8.3 every hour 24/7, statistics I have difficulty comprehending — even if the task was shared with rail it's going to be a logistical nightmare. Subsequently I would urge the McGowan Government to prioritise the whole exercise because it is insurmountable left in its current state.

John Bain, South Bunbury

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GREENWASHING

In a classic example of "greenwashing", (Bunbury Mail, January 16, Support for the cockatoos), the Alcoa Foundation is partnering with Birdlife Australia to deliver the US\$300,000 'Alcoa Community Cockatoo Recovery' initiative over the next three years.

As an "extension of the many years of work the Company had invested in understanding and protecting these iconic species and regular visitors to the State's jarrah forest, near where it operates," according to Alcoa of Australia chairman and managing director Michael Parker.

Birdlife Australia project manager Vicki Stokes said land use changes had dramatically impacted Black-Cockatoos through the loss of food, roost and nest resources.

"For example, more than 70 per cent of the Swan Coastal Plain has been cleared of banksia woodlands which are vital food sources for the cockatoos," she said.

Ms Stokes neglected to mention that the jarrah/marri forests which Alcoa dig up to mine the underlying bauxite, are major sources of food, roosting and nesting sites for the cockatoos.

This forest destruction has accelerated since Alcoa started mining an extra 2.5 million tonnes of raw bauxite for export in addition to the bauxite it mines as feed for its Wagerup refinery.

The additional bauxite is hauled from Wagerup to Bunbury in truck/trailers at a rate of five per hour, seven days a week up to 7pm.

These trucks will join the 100 truck/trailers per day on south west roads, carting lithium from Greenbushes to Bunbury and Fremantle.

Tourists and local drivers will not be favourably impressed. The Greenbushes operation will also destroy jarrah/marri forest cockatoo habitat. The Forest Products Commission is asking for tenders to obtain 100,000 tonnes of marri logs over the next year.

This will entail the logging of a huge number of marri trees which will make the survival of cockatoos precarious. The fate of the already endangered cockatoo species does not look promising.

John Vukovich, Bunbury

RAILWAY LINE - KEMERTON TO GREENBUSHES

I am not running for Council again and my term ends on October 19.

So this is really an apolitical attempt to realise some common sense:

"I am seeking Community support for the proposed railway line from Kemerton to Greenbushes.

"There are two key elements, on top of the obvious benefits of raiiling the Spodumene to Kemerton:

1) Establish a Timber Industry Logistics Hub at Greenbushes where trucks drop the logs off and rail them to the Chipping facility at Bunbury Port.

2) The Lithium Tailings should be back-loaded on rail to Greenbushes to fill the voids left by decades of Tin Mining and, of course, the removal of the Spodumene.

Let's hope that Ablemarle will agree to tip in a few million and that the Federal and State Governments can fund the remainder.

It is critical that we get the trucks off our roads (both Spodumene and Timber) for public safety and to save wear and tear on our regional roads."

Many thanks for your help and support on this important issue for the South West.

I have been running an on-line campaign on Facebook and have drawn 67 likes, 86 comments and 12 shares.

Murray Cook