

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 27 April 2006

PUBLIC TRANSPORT, MURRAY BRIDGE

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): My question is to the Minister for Transport. Why is public transport in Murray Bridge not attracting the same government subsidies as other comparable regional centres in the state, such as Mount Gambier? Regional bus services in the regional centre of Mount Gambier are being fully subsidised by the government whereas services in other regional centres, such as Murray Bridge, have been scaled back considerably to dial-a-ride arrangements that do not suit users of public transport. Murray Bridge demographics include a substantial number of aged and welfare-dependent households—the primary users of public transport.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Transport): I give an extra special heartfelt congratulations to the member for Hammond on his election.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: A rare consensus in the house! The premise to the question is simply wrong. The history of this matter is that a group of councils that style themselves 'provincial cities' unilaterally took action to withdraw funding for their responsibility for transport in their cities. We—being the good government we are—stepped in to hold that up in a number of cities. We examined the best outcome for those cities in terms of transport. I am very confident that, as the dial-a-ride is trialled and used in Murray Bridge, it will be more popular than the previous system. That has been our experience where it has been used before. The member for Light—the former mayor of Gawler—can attest to the fact that the dial-a-ride service introduced in Gawler is very popular. I am very confident. I suggest that the member for Hammond ask the question again in six months, and we will see what the people of Murray Bridge think about it. I think it will be more popular than the previous system.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mitchell has the call.