

I do not have the technical knowledge to comment on the merits of the proposals put forwards in the discussion paper but a recent incident on a Saturday morning convinces me that freight movements should be diverted to the north of the city.

On the Saturday morning in question a maximum length goods train going east was halted in such a way that two major crossing points were blocked and, because it had not travelled far enough, the boom gates were still down on a third. As a result I observed some extraordinarily dangerous risk taking by car drivers and, in one case, a pedestrian in an effort to continue their journeys. If this had been an hour earlier on a week day city traffic on the eastern side of Adelaide would have been in utter chaos.

It is only a matter of time before a major incident occurs and, given the nature of the goods sometimes carried, this could also be a major tragedy. The trains also travel through an area of very high bushfire risk and were a load of chemicals to be released into a bushfire the situation could be catastrophic. Any suggestion that trains should continue to run through such areas simply because this is the cheapest option is unacceptable. It could well end up being the most expensive option of all.

There is a second issue to be considered here and that is the need to provide passenger services to outer metropolitan areas. If the Australian government is serious about fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions then it is clear that rail services will need to be provided from areas as far afield as Mt Barker and Murray Bridge. At the moment we have a single track working to Belair. Trains are infrequent, especially at weekends. They are often delayed because of a failure to provide an adequate number of passing loops. Less people use the service because it is unreliable in respect of making tight connections especially at Goodwood and in the city.

Bus services cannot be accessed by all members of the public, especially some people with disabilities and those who choose the responsible option of riding bicycles for part of the journey. The recent closure of the line for a major upgrade caused severe disruption and was an indication that. While apparently underused, the service is vital.

Removing freight traffic and returning the line to passenger use with an upgraded service would reduce traffic congestion and further open up the Adelaide Hills to the tourist industry. This would really be looking to the future.

KM Gunn