

LABOR BETS EACH WAY ON BRIDGE

By Don Pagé

The ALP Opposition is having a bet each way over State plans to replace the old Sutherland station bridge with a similar two-lane crossing, at massive cost and disruption for no real improvement.

While Labor politicians have publicly condemned the Liberal Government's two-lanes-for-two proposal, they have declined to offer a wider bridge if they came to power.

"We will certainly look at it," demurred Maryanne Stuart, a local ALP candidate at recent elections, who posed at the station overpass for a photo-shoot with shire Councillor Barry Collier and with Jodi McKay, Labor's spokeswoman for transport.

They said a similar bridge would not alleviate traffic congestion or support future population growth. Ms McKay criticised State Liberals for ignoring "necessary infrastructure upgrades", without specifying whether a Labor Government would do any different than the "like-for-like" plan -- which nobody likes.

NEW CROSSING OPTION IGNORED

The proposal was leaked six months ago to test public sentiment, and transport authorities show signs of relenting after a public fuss since then. They now say that final plans are flexible, despite earlier insistence that they would not enlarge the existing two-lane crossing at the busy train station (pictured).

No mention was made of the obvious – a new crossing away from the station, before demolition of the old bridge.

Traffic crossing the rail line at Sutherland is disrupted every few minutes at pedestrian crossings, as commuters pour off trains at the busiest station in the Shire.

This is worsened by the convoluted road layout, forcing cars to a snail's pace. Relocating a new bridge would remove that conflict and construction delays.

Predictably, the sitting Liberal MP was berated for inaction by his Labor rival, as if in an election campaign.

"[Heathcote MP] Lee Evans needs to make sure the Minister for Transport visits Sutherland to hear from local residents and small businesses about the desperate need for infrastructure upgrading."

Ms Stuart said the government's decision to allow massive developments in the shire meant that local infrastructure was being ignored.

"Lee Evans needs to stand up to the Premier and get these upgrades delivered," she said, offering no real alternatives of her own.

NO SOLUTIONS FROM M.P. EVANS

Mr Evans offered no solution either, just restating the obvious problems. He said that building a wider bridge would be a major engineering job that would cause massive road and rail disruption (The Leader online, 2 October 2017).

"At one stage [transport officials] were saying Sutherland station would be out of action for eight to nine months," he said. "They would have to rejig the whole thing."

<http://www.theleader.com.au/story/4947964/rail-bridge-decision-up-in-the-air/?cs=1507>

