



# Barnett must be fully responsible for his election promises

**Ben Wyatt**

The editorial in *The West Australian* on April 8 and Paul Murray's column yesterday both contain a disturbing assumption. That is, that the Federal Government should be held responsible for the delivery of Colin Barnett's election promises.

The State election was fought largely over public transport. Mr Barnett committed to two major public transport projects, MAX light rail and the airport rail line. During the entire campaign Liberal Party advertising and many brochures in letterboxes described these commitments as "fully costed" and "fully funded".

Two days before the election we found out that the assumption behind the Premier's transport commitments was that \$2.5 billion would be provided by the Federal Government. That is, the Commonwealth would pay for the majority of Mr Barnett's election commitments. That is, not fully funded at all.

Nobody should be surprised that Tony Abbott will not fund urban rail in the event he becomes prime minister but regardless of this there seems to be a view among some commentators that the Commonwealth should be held accountable for the failure of the Barnett Government to deliver on its election promises.

While I appreciate that Mr Abbott may well be a barrier, it is ridiculous to assume, as Mr Barnett did, that his two major election promises would be funded in the main by the Commonwealth.

Yes, Mr Barnett has a strong mandate to deliver. Indeed he is now expected to deliver. But he cannot use failure by the Commonwealth to pay for his promises as a reason not to deliver, or to delay the timetable.

When WA Labor announced its Metronet policy we took responsibility to fund and deliver this commitment. WA Labor did not assume that we would receive anything from the Federal

Government. To make such assumptions would be without precedent and irresponsible.

Yet Mr Barnett is assuming that the Federal Government will fund 80 per cent of the cost of the airport line.

The fact that the only other projects that the Commonwealth Government is funding in WA to this level is the widening of Great Eastern Highway (80 per cent funded by the Commonwealth at a cost of \$275 million) and the Bunbury Outer-Ring Road (91 per cent from the Commonwealth at a cost of \$119 million) makes Mr Barnett's assumption of \$1.6 billion from the Commonwealth for this project simply ridiculous.

Nobody should reward Mr Barnett's assumption that the Federal Government would pay for his election promises by not holding him responsible for delivering on his "fully funded" election commitments.

**Ben Wyatt is the WA shadow treasurer**