

The WA State Government is investigating installing free wi-fi throughout Perth's public transport, claiming it will "create smarter transport options around Perth. Staying connected is important for many young people".

Of course, there's no such thing as "free" wifi. Free at the point of service means "paid for by taxpayers". Yet user-pays systems are available in airports worldwide and could be easily replicated with no net cost to the Barnett Government's budget, which is already forecast to be in net debt of over \$30 billion by 2018.

"Smart transport options" would aggregate data and integrate systems to provide a more efficient service. Providing wi-fi to bus passengers would not achieve this, rather it will be used largely for streaming videos via Youtube and browsing Facebook and Instagram.

Is it even needed? Before the London Tube installed wi-fi, a commuter could easily spend over an hour underground with no mobile signal. However the underground section of Perth's train network only amounts to only a kilometre or so in the city and Northbridge. The rest of the time, passengers can use regular mobile data, which on many mobile phone plans is now unlimited and lightning-fast on 4G. Why replicate a service that people already have?

Even worse, IT experts contacted by Mannkal have described this as a potential "hacker's paradise", with many unsecured devices exposed to malware, viruses and external control across a network that can be accessed by anyone at any time.

So a Government that is heavily in debt and crying poor to the Federal Government over GST proposes to spend money it doesn't have for a service that appears to be more of a "want" than a "need", replicates existing technology and may be ripe for abuse. Peter Walsh would have sent this suggestion straight to the shredder.