

TIER 3 GRAIN RAIL FREIGHT NETWORK

6181. Hon Alison Xamon to the Minister for Finance representing the Minister for Transport

I refer to —

- (a) the Ministerial media statement ‘State Government to invest \$178.8 million in grain freight network’ where the then Transport Minister said that although no rail lines would close some non-economic lines would be put into ‘care and maintenance’;
- (b) the Minister’s response to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs’ (Committee) Report on the *Petition No. 145 – Closure of Tier 3 Rail Lines in the Central Wheatbelt* indicating he did not support the Committee’s recommendations to keep the Tier 3 rail lines open until the end of 2014 or to conduct further economic review in the absence of conclusive evidence that these lines were viable;
- (c) the Minister’s response to my questions on notice Nos 5832, 5833, 5834, 5835, 5836 and 5837 indicating that there are currently no plans to close the Tier 3 rail lines; and
- (d) the Minister’s announcement on 11 October 2012 that the Tier 3 rail lines would stay open until at least October 31 2013,

and I ask —

- (1) Can the Minister explain and clarify the Government’s position and intentions in relation to the Tier 3 rail lines, including what it means for the lines to be placed in ‘care and maintenance’?
- (2) Why, if the Government is concerned about the safety of the Tier 3 lines, has it maintained that —
 - (a) it will not invest in Tier 3 rail; and
 - (b) any decision to keep the Tier 3 rail lines open depends on CBH Group and Brookfield Rail coming to a commercial arrangement without State Government involvement?
- (3) Why, if the decision to keep the Tier 3 lines open is a matter for private investors and commercial arrangement between CBH Group and Brookfield Rail, has the State Government repeatedly extended the date for closure of the Tier 3 rail lines?
- (4) In light of the recent announcement that the Tier 3 lines will stay open until at least October 2013, please outline the plan and timeframe over which each of the Tier 3 rail lines have/will be placed into ‘care and maintenance’.
- (5) In respect of each of the Tier 3 rail lines in (4), will placing the lines in care and maintenance result in increased truck movements on roads in the Perth hills and scarp region?
- (6) If yes to (5), can the Minister explain how the \$118.3 million that is currently being spent on road improvements will provide for the expected replacement truck traffic to operate safely while the Tier 3 rail lines are in ‘care and maintenance’?

Hon SIMON O’BRIEN replied:

The Department of Transport advises:

- (1) Brookfield Rail and Cooperative Bulk Handling (CBH) have agreed to continue operations on Tier 3 lines until 31 October 2013.
Care and maintenance is the term applied to a line section which is maintained through weed spraying and providing firebreaks.
- (2) (a)–(b) The State Government considers that the use and operation of the grain rail lines is ultimately the responsibility of the grain industry and transport providers.
Any decision to keep the Tier 3 lines operational depends on Brookfield Rail and CBH reaching a commercial agreement.
- (3) The decision to extend operations on the Tier 3 lines has been made by Brookfield Rail, based on an agreement with CBH.
- (4) It was announced on 11 October 2012 that operations on the Tier 3 lines will be extended to 31 October 2013. Further details are subject to commercial negotiations between Brookfield Rail and CBH.

- (5) The number of truck movements is not expected to increase on roads located in the Perth hills and scarp region when Tier 3 rail lines are placed in care and maintenance. Grain formerly transported by Tier 3 lines is expected to be moved by road to grain bins on the rail lines at Brookton and Kellerberrin, from where the grain can be railed to port.
- (6) Not applicable.