

GRAIN RAIL NETWORK — TIER 3 LINES — HARVEST MOVEMENT

**640. Hon KEN TRAVERS to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the answer given by the minister to a question asked by Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm on Tuesday 7 September, in which he said that he expected that next year's harvest would be moved by road to railheads on the Great Southern Railway and the Eastern Goldfields Railway.

- (1) When will the government provide the funding to upgrade all the roads affected by this decision?
- (2) Can the minister guarantee that all road upgrades in the Kwinana south zone will be completed prior to any substantial increase in truck movements occurring in that area?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:**

I thank the honourable member for his question.

- (1)–(2) The matter that the member refers to is something that was neglected under the term of the previous government, and there is a lot of catching up to be done. Fortunately, this government has taken steps and is continuing to take steps to address the matters that have been consequent upon the former Labor government's neglect of infrastructure, and to provide the answers that the Western Australian community needs to obtain about transporting the grain harvest ultimately to the main export ports. As I have already explained to the house on several occasions, considerable moneys have now been allocated by both the state and commonwealth governments for the processes.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Not for roads. And Mr Abbott was going to take it away.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** No, a substantial amount of money has already been allocated for roadworks, but that is something that the member may choose to stick his head in the sand about.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Which road in the Kwinana south zone has been funded?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! We have one question on the books at the moment, and I think we will get the answer to that one.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Indeed, Mr President. It is no secret that a business case has been prepared jointly by my department and the commonwealth government equivalent, which is being put up to cabinet, and the cabinet funding processes, for further action to be taken.

The second part of the member's question was a bit generous with implied hyperbole, but it does not actually recognise the —

**Hon Ken Travers:** A guarantee that the roads will be upgraded before any substantial increase in truck movements? Where's the hyperbole in that? Go tell a farmer in the Wheatbelt that that's hyperbole! You should watch your agricultural backbenchers, mate; they're looking very nervous about you.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I rest my case. "Implied hyperbole" was the expression I used, and we have just heard an example of it from Hon Ken Travers.

The fact is that he is talking about roads that already exist and in respect of which there is a substantial amount of work currently being done to identify and prioritise the order in which works will be done to meet the evolving nature of the freight task for grain, particularly in areas where we are expecting more localised movements on road. The member seems to think that there is some expectation out there that no movement of grain on roads can take place until the state's road system is somehow remanufactured. That seems to be what the member is implying. I tell the member that that is not —

**Hon Ken Travers:** I said before "any substantial increase", minister! Your answer the other day was that the majority is currently taken on rail and it is going to be taken on road. I want to know if you are going to fund the road upgrades before you take grain transport off rail and put it onto the roads.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Members opposite are short of attention when they are in government, but now that they are in opposition they seem to be predicting all the things that are going to happen as a consequence of what they failed to do. The fact of the matter is that this government is taking the actions necessary to meet the freight task. This has involved all stakeholders in a process that I have embarked upon. We have already identified and allocated \$80 million to the process and a business case is being worked through jointly by the state and commonwealth governments, which I am progressing through the state processes of cabinet, so the member should not think that we are not on the job with this. I am not going to fall for this and I hope nobody else in this place is dopey enough to fall for it either. The intention of the member's question is to get some sort of undertaking that the grain harvest somehow cannot go ahead until a complete road rebuilding program has taken

place, and that is an undertaking I will not give. That is what he is inviting me to say, and that is plainly a nonsense.

**Hon Ken Travers:** No, I'm asking you to tell us what you're going to do to fix the problem after two years in government, with \$135 million from the federal Labor government on the table. What are you going to do to fix the problem?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The question has been asked and the minister started his answer about seven minutes ago, by my reckoning. I am sure that he is coming very close to the end of the answer.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Unless the member wants to keep moving the goalposts. I have clearly responded to it, but the point is that we are not just responding to this matter with words, which seems to be all that the Labor Party has; we are actually addressing the question with action, something that the Labor Party never did in seven and a half years.