

GRAIN RAIL NETWORK

Statement

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Transport) [5.52 pm]: I will be as brief as interjections will allow in case another member wants to speak. I do have to respond because I cannot let this sort of accusation hang in the air.

An argument seems to be being developed, for future use, that somehow this government is deliberately fostering policies, with a blind being turned to the likelihood of human casualties. That is setting it up so that whenever there is an accident or someone is hurt on a Wheatbelt road in the future the opposition can say that it is somehow the direct result of this government's policies. I think that is a very regrettable attitude for opposition members to display and I would urge them to reconsider it. It does them no credit to try to construct such a strategy.

In relation to the matters that Hon Ken Travers was just discussing: he is entitled to hold those views, if he must. However, he first needs to explain to us why his government did nothing.

Hon Ken Travers: I have just explained that in my speech, minister!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Why it did nothing about the Nyabing and Gnowangerup lines when they were put into care and maintenance. Instead there was an opting for a lot of very heavy freight to go down Chester Pass Road, which plainly is a road that is not fit for purpose. It is a road that the former government did nothing to upgrade. Earlier this year I found over \$7 million to use to upgrade it. Why did I make sure that I found that money? Because I am concerned that people will be killed if it is not upgraded. It is about time the member gave some credit to that fact. It is about time that members opposite who are accusing this government of being responsible whenever there is a mishap on the Coalfields highway acknowledge that in eight Labor budgets not one cent was allocated to capital works on the Coalfields highway but the money that we allocated —

Hon Ken Travers: Minister, I have acknowledged that we have failed on the Collie Coalfields highway but you made an election commitment that you haven't honoured.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am sorry but that does not add up. The fact is that the work crews are out there now and we will see plenty more of it. I will match the significant investment that we are making in those areas with the zero dollars that were provided by the Gallop and Carpenter governments.

I am sure we will come back to this issue time and again. The opposition is trying to make something out of nothing. I do not think anyone who has followed this debate would not understand that I have a real commitment to doing something about the future of the grain rail network, and I am being successful in that. I am appreciative of the support of Cabinet.

Hon Max Trenorden: About \$300 million has been allocated in the past 20 years.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Indeed, it has. I do not mind being held to account and I do not mind being scrutinised. I do think there is a need for the opposition to be a bit real and acknowledge when things are being done.