

**GRAIN RAIL FREIGHT NETWORK — TIER 3 LINES**

*Statement*

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Transport)** [5.59 pm]: I thank the house for this very brief opportunity because I have only a brief time to respond to what Hon Ken Travers has said. I do not accept his version of events at all and this debate will obviously continue. For now, let us leave it to an independent source that does know what it is talking about and members can check on it. This is a good way to terminate these proceedings just now. I refer to page 6 of today's issue of *Farm Weekly* where the very questions that we are talking about are discussed. The article has Australian Railroad Group general manager Ken Potts talking about the standard of tier 3 rail lines. It states —

ARG general manager Ken Potts said accusations that the track's manager, WestNet Rail, was to blame and had ignored its investment obligations, were proved inaccurate when the Public Transport Authority recently audited WestNet Rail's State Government lease agreement.

“We work closely with WestNet Rail,” Mr Potts said.

Let us face it, if anyone is going to be upset about the condition of the track, it will be the rail operator ARG. The article continues —

“There's been some noise that it —

That is, WestNet Rail —

has not maintained the grain rail lines properly over the years.

“But the PTA audited them recently and found WestNet Rail has exceeded its maintenance obligations under the contract.

“Accusations that the poor rail's condition is WestNet Rail's fault are not quite right.

“I think it has been maintaining the track but it just hasn't spent any money on capital: but under its lease arrangements, the government is required to do that.”

...

Mr Potts said the current State Government should be congratulated for repairing the network and doing more in the last 12 months than any other government during the last decade.

“At least this government has a vision to get the rail fixed and has committed money which is a great start,” he said.