

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 27 November 2014]

p8901b-8913a

Hon Ken Travers; Hon James Chown; Hon Darren West; Hon Paul Brown; Hon Alanna Clohesy; Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Mark Lewis; Hon Martin Aldridge

TIER 3 RAIL LINES — REOPENING

Motion

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [10.09 am] — without notice: I move —

That this Council calls on the Liberal–National government to support the grains industry and rural communities by reopening the tier 3 rail lines.

Once again, we turn to the issue of the bad decision by the Barnett government back in 2010 to close over 700 kilometres of tier 3 rail lines in Western Australia, and we turn to the fact that there has been yet another report systematically highlighting the failure of the Liberal–National government in this regard. As a result of today's debate, I hope that we will start to see more members on the other side of the chamber come over and join Labor's call for the current government to reopen these lines. We wonder why the government does not make the sensible decision to reopen rail lines in Western Australia.

Hon Jim Chown: Are you going to make a firm commitment in this place —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Jim Chown will get his chance in a moment. We made commitments at the last election, as you did, but we would have honoured our commitments, unlike you lying toads! Do not come in here and talk about that!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Point of Order

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That was a disgraceful exhibition of shouting, bullying and language in the chamber. It is the sort of thing that Hon Sally Talbot has repeatedly complained about in the past. The fact that a member should turn around and shout at other members in this chamber in that fashion and allege they are lying toads is unparliamentary. He ought to be brought to account on that.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The member is not helping his point of order by interjecting.

Members, I think it is a case of who started the yelling first. We really do need to remind ourselves of the provisions of standing order 44 "Offensive Words", which states —

A Member shall not use offensive words in debate, including offensive words against either House of Parliament, any Member of either House, the Sovereign, the Governor or a judicial officer.

I bring that to members' attention. In the point of order there was a suggestion that there was an imputation or personal reflection. Hon Ken Travers did not refer to any single member, so I am not persuaded that that provision applies. He did refer to a political party. I think the intent of that standing order is clear in any event. I remind members of standing order 45, which states —

... imputations of improper motives and all personal reflections on Members shall be considered highly disorderly.

I suggest that if members do not interject, we might be able to get through this debate without voices being raised.

Debate Resumed

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Thank you, Madam Deputy President.

Hon Helen Morton interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Listen to her, she cannot help herself.

It is interesting that the parliamentary secretary would want to raise the issue of election commitments, because at the last election —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! We are not taking any interjections. Hon Ken Travers has the call and I think it will aid the debate if he is heard in silence.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: At the last election, the Liberal and National Parties made two solemn commitments to the people of Western Australia. One was that they would reopen the tier 3 rail lines and the second was that there would be no toll roads. Why do I raise the issue of toll roads? Today, I want to ask: is one of the reasons that the Liberal and National Parties are not reopening the tier 3 rail lines that they have an agenda to introduce toll roads? We have already heard that they plan to introduce a toll road on Roe Highway into Fremantle.

Point of Order

Hon JIM CHOWN: The member's motion states —

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That this Council calls on the Liberal–National government to support the grains industry and rural communities by reopening the tier 3 rail lines.

The member is totally off the subject of his own motion.

Hon Ken Travers: No, I am not.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Yes, the member is.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! There is a point of order before the house. I think that the way the motion is phrased is quite broad, and there is not a point of order because Hon Ken Travers was speaking to the motion currently before the house.

Debate Resumed

Hon KEN TRAVERS: For the parliamentary secretary's benefit, the point I was making was that one of the reasons I think the Liberal–National government will not honour its commitment to reopen these rail lines is that it wants toll roads in Western Australia. We now know that the government has broken its solemn commitment not to introduce a toll road on Roe Highway. It is fascinating, yesterday, after I put this motion forward, I read the parliamentary secretary's travel report about his trip to Greece. The travel report states —

Greece has had a user-pays ideology in terms of toll-roads in their country since 1927, which is one that I believe requires further consideration in WA, particularly in terms of heavy-haulage impacts upon the road.

Why does the parliamentary secretary think heavy haulage impacts our roads? It is because the government has closed the tier 3 grain rail lines and put additional traffic and heavy vehicles on our roads. Later in the report, the parliamentary secretary, states that Perth's population growth —

... has placed massive pressure on the road transport system, in Perth, notwithstanding the Government's ongoing investment in road infrastructure.

We can come to that later —

The extremely heavy freight movements on WA roads, and the consequential need for evermore upgrades and annual expenditure upon upkeep, are also of major concern to the State of WA, particularly given the length and breadth of our road system. A user pays system on the two major arterial freeways into Perth would go towards the upkeep of those freeways and would also go towards encouraging road users onto public transport to ease traffic congestion.

Toll roads would also increase the cost of transporting grain to freight. Not only has the government closed tier 3 rail lines, which we now know increased the cost of taking grain to port for people in mainly the Kwinana zone where the tier 3 lines are, but on top of that the government now intends to toll roads—that is what the parliamentary secretary wants to see. We know that the parliamentary secretary has been one of the strongest advocates in government for closing the tier 3 rail lines, and now we find out that the real agenda is to close rail lines and not only make people pay a higher cost to get grain to port, but also put in a toll road. I suspect that is because they know that having closed the tier 3 rail lines —

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: This a short debate, can the Madam Deputy President ask the numblers on the other side of the chamber to keep it down, please?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Having closed the tier 3 grain rail lines, there is no doubt that the government is now concerned that that will lead to substantial traffic on metropolitan Perth roads. How can the government drive that traffic back to rail so that it can implement the flawed Brookton strategy? They can make it more expensive to take a truck through Perth to port. One does not have to be a Rhodes scholar to work out the government's agenda here, led by the architect of it all, Hon Jim Chown; it is closing the rail lines to make it more expensive and to see the transfer onto trucks, and then they will charge the trucks to try to drive them back to rail. The end result of all that will be that farmers in Western Australia will have to pay more to get their grain to port. The farmers that members opposite purport to represent in the Agricultural Region will end up paying more.

I look forward to the same flexibility when Hon Jim Chown speaks in the chamber.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

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Hon KEN TRAVERS: I can understand why members opposite—one in particular—are so concerned with trying to drown me out on this issue. Hon Jim Chown is incredibly embarrassed about it, as the architect.

Let us turn to another issue that goes to the whole history and the saga of these rail lines. I am sure members are aware that back in October 2013 I asked Hon Jim Chown whether the government had entered into any deeds of variation to the lease agreement with Brookfield Rail for the rail freight corridor. I will not go through the full name of the lease. The answer given to the chamber at the time was no. As a result of the report that was released by the committee in the other place, we discover that variations had been made to that lease agreement. I suspect that one of the arguments that the government will try to use is that it did not mislead the house, because it will get into a semantic argument about what a deed of variation is, as opposed to a variation to a contract. The simple fact of the matter is that a contract that varies another contract is a deed of variation.

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is all right; I have found Hon Jim Chown's defence on this matter, and I will get to that.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Firstly, I asked whether the government had assigned the lease and the answer was no, so clearly the name on the lease has not changed, so that defence is not available to the parliamentary secretary on this matter. Secondly, I asked whether the government had entered into a deed of variation, to which the answer was again no. I then asked whether the government had entered into any contract that varies the terms or, by any normal language, a deed of variation, and I was advised that in fact three contracts or deeds were entered into that varied the contract with Brookfield Rail.

Prima facie, we then get to the question of whether the house has been misled. I would suggest that indeed the house has been misled, but did the parliamentary secretary mislead us? For the parliamentary secretary to have misled us, he would have to have known that those deeds had been entered into when he gave those answers to the chamber. There is a serious issue, which I will raise at another time, that this Parliament needs to take up with the Department of Transport about the way in which it provides answers and the seriousness with which it takes the answers, because the poor parliamentary secretary, almost on a regular basis, has to stand and correct his answers in this place. Nonetheless, I then asked whether the parliamentary secretary knew about the three contracts that varied the contract when he gave that answer. The parliamentary secretary advised the house that he became aware on 16 October, when the report was tabled in Parliament. Therefore, the parliamentary secretary is exonerated, based on that answer. He clearly did not know about those variations, so he could not be accused of misleading the Parliament.

However, that raises the question of how, over all the time that we have been having these debates about the question of tier 3 rail lines, Hon Jim Chown, as the parliamentary secretary—the 2IC to the Minister for Transport at a parliamentary level—was never told about these variations. Why was the minister never told about these variations? Then we learn on Monday from the Leader of the National Party that the cabinet was not even told about these variations. Why was there such secrecy? What was the ongoing agenda of the Liberal–National government that the cabinet, the parliamentary secretary and the public did not know about? Those are serious questions that this government has still failed to answer.

A couple of other points need to be made in this debate. Before the election, the Liberal and National Parties promised to keep the tier 3 lines open. We now hear on a regular basis the Minister for Transport, when challenged on this issue, referring to the 2009 strategic grain network report that called for these lines to be closed and saying that the government has implemented that report. That is fine up until the commitment was made—it is not fine actually; it is a flawed report—and it might have been a defence. However, when the Liberal Party placed an advertisement on the front page of *Farm Weekly* and put up posters across the electorate saying that it supported tier 3 rail lines and would keep grain on rail and reopen the rail lines, it could no longer use that report as its defence. The government made that commitment.

Why was there all the secrecy? We are told by Terry Redman that the cabinet was not told, but we know that the National Party was told. The then Leader of the National Party, Hon Brendon Grylls, was one of the strongest advocates for closure. Hon Simon O'Brien, in a conversation with me and a third party, openly pointed out that Hon Brendon Grylls was a strong advocate for the closure of these lines, and it was Hon Simon O'Brien's view that there would be no way that Hon Brendon Grylls would cave in on that point, because he was one of those leading the charge on this issue. That is what Hon Simon O'Brien said in front of me in a conversation. Hon Brendon Grylls was one of the strong advocates. It may not have gone to cabinet, but it was a decision of

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the Liberal–National government of the time to close the rail lines. But the government got it wrong, and farmers in our wheatbelt will now be paying more and more for their grain to go to port and, if Hon Jim Chown gets his way on the next part of his agenda, we will have toll roads that will push the cost even higher. Imagine a tollway on the two major freeways north and south of Perth.

I do not normally take to public servants in this Parliament—I steer clear of it—but I think on this occasion an issue needs to be raised. It also goes to the minister of the Crown. Public servants are trying to blame, in some way, Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd for this debate. I want to make it clear that I have no gripe against Brookfield Rail. I understand that Brookfield Rail is a private company that does what it is required to do. In fact, if it were not trying to maximise returns for its shareholders, it would be in breach of the company laws in Australia. I want to make that very clear. I have no complaint about what Brookfield Rail does, but I do have a complaint about the way the government deals with Brookfield Rail. It is the government's job to keep the operator of a monopoly under control. The original contract provided for these rail lines to be given back to the state of Western Australia if Brookfield Rail did not want to operate them.

Hon Simon O'Brien: In that case—I'm trying to help —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do not need the help of Hon Simon O'Brien; I know this issue well enough. Hon Simon O'Brien did not get it right in the first place, so I am not going to rely too heavily on him now.

If Brookfield did not want to operate the rail lines, there was a mechanism for handing them back, or the state investing in them. In 2010, the government, by one of those deeds of variation I referred to earlier, removed the capacity for the government to say that if Brookfield did not want to operate the lines, it should give them back to the government. The argument given at the time, which the director general of the Department of Transport now uses, was that the decision to give up rights over the tier 3 rail lines was based on the fact that taxpayers faced a \$2 million a year maintenance bill. One would not have to be a Rhodes scholar to ask: if a private company that is trying to maximise its returns to shareholders is going to take over a \$2 million maintenance bill without any return because it is closing the lines, what is in it for the company? Why would the company take on that responsibility? Clearly, the company saw that there was a future commercial opportunity in it at some point in time. My view is that we have now reached that point of commercial opportunity at which Brookfield is now able to seek from the taxpayers the maximum penalty to have those lines reopened. This week, Hon Darren West asked the question about what it would cost for the government to take back these lines. The answer was that the cost would be substantial. I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary, in his response today, explain to us what he means by "substantial". How much, exactly, is substantial? On top of the substantial cost to get those lines back—lines that are not even being operated—the state would have to come up with money to assist with the reopening of those lines. CBH is ready to participate, make its contribution and provide its fair share. With the same user-pays mentality that Hon Jim Chown seems to be so fond of, CBH will make its contribution.

As per the rest of the tier 1 and tier 2 lines, we accept that the growers should not pay the full cost; it will require further investment, which the government—I dispute this figure—claims is now \$100 million. Thanks to the brilliance of the Liberal–National government led by Hon Simon O'Brien and supported by Hon Brendon Grylls, rather than having to make the payment to have those lines reopened, which, at the time, was estimated to be \$93 million, we now have to make a substantial payment, plus pay to have the lines brought up to a level necessary to operate! It is a debacle by anyone's measure that the only people in this state who knew about the complexities this government got us into were members of the Barnett Liberal–National government cabinet. Yet at the last election that alliance gave a solemn commitment to the people of Western Australia that it would reopen these lines. However, we have not seen it do anything; it has not honoured its commitment. Liberal–National members sit there and say that it is now a decision for CBH Group and Brookfield Rail. Yet their commitment included that the government would invest in those rail lines. Why is an officer of the government not sitting in on those negotiations putting forward the state government's contribution aimed at keeping those lines open—those lines that are now very necessary to get traffic off the freeways and the roads in the wheatbelt because of road safety and in the metropolitan area because of congestion. Hon Jim Chown's suggestion, his government having created that problem, is to create toll roads in Western Australia to force farmers to double handle their loads.

I note that part of the original government strategy included upgrading the grain bins at Kellerberrin and Brookton. I note further that this government has failed to spend a cent on upgrading the bins, and, again, that means it will be more costly to transfer the grain. The tolls would have to be made nice and high to cover the double-handling costs at those two depots to try to keep grain off rail. Why not simply open the rail into the tier 3 lines, put it onto a train once and get it to port, using the cheapest measure?

This is waste and mismanagement by the Barnett Liberal–National government that is the cause of our massive debt problems today. It is not because they have built lots of things; it is because they have wasted lots of money. The tier 3 debate sums it up like no other. There has been catastrophe after catastrophe, overlaid with lie after lie

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about what they will do. It is time for the government to cut its losses, honour its election commitment and ensure that the cheapest supply chain to port is in place and without any toll roads.

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [10:33 am]: May I congratulate Hon Ken Travers on the outstanding motion that he moved here today! I never cease to be amazed that he moves motions that allow the government to demonstrate the excellent work it is doing on behalf of the community; in this case, rural communities, the grain industry at large and the tier 3 rail lines. In fact, our record will be stated here today. It will not be emotional claptrap based on political lines; it will be quite factual.

Hon Ken Travers: Who's giving that speech?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I will not take any interjections because the honourable member refused to take mine. However, I note that one of my interjections was to try to get a commitment today out of the possible future Minister for Transport that the Labor Party would make a commitment of \$100-plus million to rectify the tier 3 line. He would not answer that question; he would not take an interjection.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Jim Chown has the call.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you, Madam Deputy President. Within three minutes of his opening remarks, Hon Ken Travers lost the argument on this issue. I will state in this house right now that I am against any form of toll. However, I support efficiency dividends or maintenance requirements for heavy transport. In fact, maintenance requirements are applied to heavy haulage routes throughout this state certainly in the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the goldfields by local governments, and Hon Ken Travers knows that.

With regard to the great assistance the grains industry has received from this government, probably one of the most beneficial things that industry has received, including farmers in the tier 3 area, is the exemption order made by this government in 2010 to allow GM canola to be grown. In 2010, zero hectares of GM canola were grown. In three years, the crop size grew from zero to 168 000 hectares and is increasing annually. That is one of this government's great initiatives for the agriculture and grain industries of this state. GM canola has great agronomic benefits; it is environmentally beneficial compared with non-GM canola. Its use has cut down the amount of herbicide usage from four, to six to two and its uptake is growing every year.

One of the other great initiatives for people in the grain industry is that for the first time in 80 years Western Australia has an independent acquirer and exporter of grain in Bunbury, in the form of the very reputable international company, Bunge Ltd. Growers now have real competition. In the past two years, since Bunge has been operating, it has topped the market in the purchase of grain. Other acquirers and exporters of grain in this state are now sharpening their pencils to meet competition. This government has spent significant amounts in the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre, InterGrain and, of course, the Department of Agriculture and Food centres in areas such as Merredin, Katanning and Northam to enhance varieties in the grain industry to bring about greater production throughout the agricultural area, including the tier 3 areas.

Hon Ken Travers' motion refers to reopening the tier 3 rail lines. I will give the house a bit of history on this matter. It is a long history but it is worth putting on the record so that opposition members who support Hon Ken Travers' motion here today understand some of the Labor Party's irresponsible actions. Who was in government in 2004? The Labor government. I am not sure that Hon Ken Travers was the parliamentary secretary at that time—maybe he was and maybe he was not—but in 2004, the grain freight network review was initiated by CBH Group and then ARG, which was CBH's grain contractor. The report on that review states that CBH needs to bring back its primary receival sites of around 196 to 42 key points throughout the agriculture region. The report also states —

Approximately 950 km of narrow gauge branchline closures—potentially including the Merredin lines, Bonnie Rock, Dalwallinu-Morawa, Nyabing, Gnowangerup, Quairading. A number of closure scenarios have been proposed, with different financial implications.

Under this Labor Party, in 2004, CBH initiated an independent report that stated that around 900-plus lines needed to be closed in the narrow-gauge rail system. I am not aware of what was said about that report by the then Labor government in this house or the other house. I suspect very little was said. Furthermore, in 2008, the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan—I know Hon Ken Travers was her parliamentary secretary—initiated the independent review of the Grain Infrastructure Group's freight network review—the GIG report.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Only for a time.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Thank you, Hon Simon O'Brien. I wonder why that was. The GIG report was initiated by the then Labor government. The people who undertook that review comprised CBH, government agencies and the Western Australian Local Government Association. That report recommended that the Canning–Nyabing

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line be closed, and it is closed today; that the Tambellup–Gnowangerup be closed, and it too is closed; and that the Merredin feeder lines be closed. That Labor government's own report recommended that the tier 3 lines be closed. The report stated —

... with the grain network from these locations transported by road to major grain receival sites and then onto the rail network.

Hon Kate Doust: You closed them.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon JIM CHOWN: Recommendations from Hon Ken Travers' minister state clearly that no truck should come into the metropolitan area and that virtually all tonnages should be moved from one receival point to another rail head elsewhere. The recommendations of that report were never put in place. Why is that? It is because the Labor government lost the unlosable election, and this government came into being in late 2008. Hon Simon O'Brien, as a highly responsible Minister for Transport, obviously read the Grain Infrastructure Group report and was not happy about it for one reason: the group had not one grower representative body. It was an interagency group run by the Labor Party and that was the result. The Labor Party had such disregard for the agricultural grain industry that it could not even put a grower representative on its group to help with the report. Today Hon Ken Travers stood and said that this government does not support the grain industry. What a joke! The strategic grain network review was taken up by Hon Simon O'Brien and included grower representative bodies, such as the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, and government agencies. The report stated —

However, in some areas, notably the Kwinana South zone, rail services are unsustainable as they are uncompetitive with road transport, and under all plausible scenarios this will continue. Therefore the low quality track on which they operate does not warrant resleeper investment. This would save costs for resleepering of \$94 million. The SGNR has found that cessation of rail services is likely to occur on several lines in this area ...

Regardless of that report, Hon Simon O'Brien initiated what was called the transitional assistance package. Some \$17 million was invested to offset cheaper road freight in some of these areas and allow grain freight to take place on rail. The initial tranche was \$11 million in the first year and it was wound down over the next three years. That was allowed to be taken up by grain haulage on rail, not road. Regardless of that report, through the work of this government these tier 3 rail lines remained operational until the end of the last financial year. Trains operated on those lines until the end of the last financial year regardless of that report. This government, in negotiation with Brookfield Rail, made that happen. Why are trains not operating there today? The answer is simple: the agreement between Brookfield Rail and CBH ceased at the end of the last financial year. After a long period of negotiation, these two entities employed a professional facilitator to help them sit down and come to some arrangement. They could not come to an arrangement. I will state here today, as I have stated in the press, that I believe both CBH and Brookfield have been grossly irresponsible in this matter. If they cannot sit down with a professional negotiator and come to a point at which they can move forward, what is happening here? Who is not serious about operating on these lines? The government and I want to see it happen.

Hon Ken Travers has asked the government to invest in those lines. Why would any responsible government make that sort of investment in the tier 3 lines when one of the major carriers, CBH, is not prepared to put in writing that it will operate on one or two of these lines for a period? That is the scenario. It has not been mentioned in this place and it should be mentioned, because I have mentioned it in the press on more than one occasion: the Labor Party chooses to ignore the fact that both CBH and Brookfield are in the Economic Regulation Authority arbitration process. I hope the independent arbitration system gets both parties together and finds a resolution for the growers. CBH and Brookfield have given briefings in the Liberal party room and have both made the commitment on separate occasions that if they can sit down together, they will both reinvest in those lines to get them operational. However, the independent arbitration process has to take place. If the government was to interfere in an arbitration process, who would be the first person to stand and condemn the government for interfering? Hon Ken Travers would be, of course, and quite rightly so.

This process will receive unconditional support from this government until the end of this financial year. The arbitration process is being carried out under the Commercial Arbitration Act and it will determine whether Brookfield Rail and CBH are able to carry on. My understanding is that the arbitrator has no time limit in which to hand down his determinations, but once those determinations are handed down to both parties, they have 30 days to consider them. Then they have a following 90 days to come to some sort of agreement between themselves in response to the arbitrator's determinations. As the lessee, Brookfield is absolutely bound by those determinations, but as the user of those lines, CBH is not bound by those determinations and can walk away from the process. If that happens, either party can write to the ERA and ask for another independent arbitrator so

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that the process can go forward. I am hopeful—this is my personal opinion—that after this arbitration takes place and Brookfield and CBH say that these are the rail lines on which they want to operate and in which they will invest money, because they believe they are commercially viable for the next 20 years, I will be the first person to go to the Minister for Transport and the Premier and ask why we cannot put in money to help this process. That is a commitment I make here today and that is a commitment that the Labor Party will not make and has not made here this morning.

I am hoping that other members in this place stand and make some factual statements on the matter, because the press, the public and the grain-growing industry are getting fed up and very, very tired of the statements being made by opposition members on this matter. They do not deal with the facts; they deal with emotional issues. Everybody knows that the Labor Party is trying to win political points against this very good and responsible government. It is as simple as that. I think that in the past 12 months there have been two demonstrations at Parliament on this matter. One was earlier in the year when a convoy was organised. Four trucks turned up. On Tuesday there was a demonstration out the front of Parliament and 40 people were there. I believe only half of them represented active growers in the tier 3 area. But that does not mean that this is not a serious issue; grain on rail is important in this state. I am hoping Hon Simon O'Brien will stand after my 36 seconds that are left and give chapter-and-verse figures that show we have invested in not only the rail network —

Hon Darren West: He does not know.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I know, but I do not have time to read it out to members. I am looking forward to Hon Darren West's contribution, which will be based on emotion and hot air. The figures show the government's investment in the tier 1 and tier 2 rail lines and the road networks throughout Western Australia to ensure efficiency in this state's grain haulage system.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural) [10.48 am]: What an enlightening contribution! Goodness me. I am not quite sure how Hon Jim Chown is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Transport and I am not quite sure how Hon Jim Chown represents the Agricultural Region. There are clearly other factors at play than knowledge of his portfolio and his electorate, but I digress.

I am one of two working farmers in this place, so I speak on this issue with some authority.

Several members interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: I have only 10 minutes, so I look forward to everyone else's contribution. Along with all my farming colleagues in the agricultural industry in regional communities, I have never been able to work out what has driven this government to close a publicly owned asset—it is owned by all Western Australians—that delivers a service that makes our grain industry more efficient. I have never been able to work out why the government would close down a perfectly operating rail network that, in the last month before it was closed, handled more grain than it had ever handled in any month before. Clearly, there is nothing wrong with the system; it can be used. I have never been able to work that out, and neither has anybody else. I was involved with this issue long before I entered Parliament, and it makes absolutely no sense why this government is so anti-grain industry and anti-wheatbelt, especially since the wheatbelt has been such a good supporter of conservative governments over many, many years. Why has it got this public policy setting so wrong? How could it have arrived at this position? It has done a complete 180 degree reversal; both the Liberal Party and the National Party have this issue completely wrong. I acknowledge what Hon Jim Chown said; there were not a lot of people on the steps of Parliament House on Tuesday. That is because it is the middle of the harvest, and everybody is busy bringing in record harvests, which we have had for two of the last three years, to the wheat bins for the government to pick up and move on trucks over the most dangerous roads in the state. What the government is doing on this issue and with our rail network makes absolutely no sense to anyone at all.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Darren West has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: The Liberals and Nationals refer back to a report from 2009, which was a clearly flawed report, and everyone knew it was flawed at the time. A public meeting was held in Bruce Rock just after the tabling of that report, and the chair of the committee, Fred Affleck—a nice man—to his credit fronted the Bruce Rock community that day and admitted that he had never travelled on the York to Bruce Rock road; yet he tabled that report. That to me says that the report was clearly flawed, if the person who chaired the committee had not even travelled the road over which he was going to put hundreds of thousands of tonnes of grain, and was shocked when he saw it for the first time. That report should have immediately been filed in file 13 and thrown in the bin, but it suited the government's agenda, so it stuck with it.

As I said, these are the most dangerous roads in the state. I have two children with P-plates, so it means a lot to me that these roads are so dangerous. People are seven times more likely to have an accident or be killed on

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roads in the wheatbelt than they are on roads in the metropolitan area, and twice as likely as in any other region in the state. We win the race that no other jurisdiction in the world wants to win; we have the highest road fatality rate of around 50 people per 100 000. Why would the government put an extra 1.7 million tonnes of grain on those roads? Why would it mix all those trucks up with front-wheel-drive cars, school buses and family cars? What the government has done on the tier 3 rail issue makes no sense to anyone.

It has been a reasonably tough time in the eastern and north-eastern wheatbelt, and many of the areas that these lines service have had some difficult seasons. The government is now charging them extra per tonne to cart their grain to its final destination in Perth. The government tells us that those lines are unviable, yet when they close, the freight rates increase. That is nonsensical; it makes absolutely no sense. If we take a little further the unviability argument that the government continually runs, where will it end? Will it end with passenger services in the city? I would have thought that they would cost the government money. Will it go to schools and hospitals? Where does this end? Why is it that our services have to be so viable, but nobody else's have to? If they are unviable, why have freight rates increased? Barry West was here on Tuesday, representing the Kulin farming community: why is it that their rates have risen by \$3.85 a tonne after the government closed their railway line? I say good on them for telling the government where to put its \$3.85 a tonne! The government should pay that; it was its mistake that caused the increase. The symbolic part of last Tuesday was when the farmers of Western Australia gave the government an invoice for \$2 million, which is the calculated extra cost of moving our grain. It will be less efficient, and less grain will make it to market within an appropriate time to capitalise on spikes in the world market. Again, the government's action on tier 3 makes no sense and has never made any sense.

It also makes no sense for the National Party to have been so silent on this issue. In fact, the only time we hear from the National Party is when it cheers the closure of another railway line. These are electorates that traditionally formed the National Party's heartland, so it makes no sense to me why the National Party does not get in and support the farmers. Agriculture is the chief industry of the wheatbelt and farmers are the party's core constituency. It makes absolutely no sense to me.

We then discovered that this process may have been blurred somewhat. Hon Ken Travers pointed out that there were changes made to the lease, although I think Parliament was misled as to whether those changes were made or not. Around that time there were some significant political donations made to conservative political parties, and all of a sudden the penny dropped in the wheatbelt. We in the wheatbelt think that this is something that makes some level of sense of the way in which the government has handled this issue. Despite this, on the steps of Parliament House last Tuesday the National Party was still giving false hope to residents of the wheatbelt that the National Party will support the wheatbelt on tier 3. The Leader of the National Party said, "We might put some royalties for regions money into tier 3". A man came up to Mia Davies—it was the first time I had seen Mia at an agriculture-related rally for a while—shook her hand and said, "Isn't it great that Terry's going to put \$75 million into tier 3 rail?" I shook my head and thought, "He's not". Why does the National Party not come clean with the electorate and say, "We don't support you; we're not going to fix your railway lines; we don't mind if your freight rates rise; and we don't really care about your road toll"? That is what the National Party needs to come clean about and say, and I hope that someone from the National Party stands today and says, "We are not going to support you on tier 3 rail". The National Party continues to give the electorate false hope that it might just change its mind and support what the communities want, but it clearly is not going to, so please, just make it clear.

Hon Jim Chown pointed out that he wanted a commitment from Labor at the last election. Hon Ken Travers and I were able to convince the Leader of the Opposition to drive out to Mawson, hop in a grain truck, and drive it back down to Mundaring. I do not think the Premier has ever done that, and if he ever did, I am quite sure that he would tell government members that he wants tier 3 rail lines reopened. We were able to get a commitment from the Leader of the Opposition, which we took to the last election, of \$30 million —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon DARREN WEST: We took a commitment of \$30 million to the last election. It was not a wishy-washy claim of, "If you're viable, we might support you", or "We might have some royalties for regions money"; it was a firm commitment. The government clearly saw that as a threat to its electoral prospects, so we had all these ambiguous claims that, "We might support you on tier 3."

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Darren West has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: I also take on board Hon Ken Travers' remarks about toll roads, and I think there is something in them. There is clearly another agenda explaining why the Liberal government would close a public

asset that delivers services to an industry as important as agriculture. There is clearly another reason, and I think we might have found something, and I see on Twitter that maybe a few other people might agree with us. I say to members opposite that they should support their electorates and support the agricultural industry; they will not find that hard, because it is a good industry filled with good people. The government should revert back to the terms of the 1999 lease and tell Brookfield Rail, “You’re not using those lines, you haven’t maintained the standards, so we’ll have them back.” The government should also give Brookfield Rail back its political donations, which have only muddied the waters and created doubts in people’s minds as to why the government has acted the way it has. The government should go back to the original 1999 lease, and give the lines to someone who will use them so that that publicly owned asset will once again be used by the people of Western Australia and create a more efficient grain supply and logistics chain so that we can get our grain to port more quickly. I know a lot of members opposite do not understand why that is important, but I can tell them that it is. We could get our harvests done more cheaply, more efficiently and, most importantly, more safely.

HON PAUL BROWN (Agricultural) [10.59 am]: I thank Hon Ken Travers for once again bringing this matter to the attention of the house through his motion. I am more than happy to make a small contribution on behalf of the National Party. I say from the outset that Hon Ken Travers has shown great contempt for our wheatbelt communities, and when I say “our” wheatbelt communities, I do not mean his wheatbelt communities. The motion that Hon Ken Travers has chosen to put to this house is another attempt at base politics by him and the Labor Party. He has not even given the wheatbelt communities the respect that they deserve by spending a little bit of time forming a well-worded motion. Instead, he has been flippant and shown scant regard and the true disrespect he has for them. This is absolute dog-whistle politics by the Labor Party. I will make the job of Hon Ken Travers a little easier and hopefully, at the same time, will enable Hon Darren West to stop his schadenfreude—his crocodile tears—while he is fawning all over his Labor leadership. Hon Ken Travers calls on the Liberal–National government to support the grains industry and the rural communities to reopen the tier 3 rail lines. I cannot speak for the Liberal Party, but I will speak for myself and my National Party colleagues —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PAUL BROWN: Of course we support the grain industry.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! May I just remind members that when the Chair calls for order, members are required to respond to that call for order by keeping silent, not by continuing with interjections. Hon Paul Brown has the call.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Of course we support the grain industry and our regional communities. We are the only party that has consistently shown that support. We have not walked away from anything that we have said. We have not walked away from our regional communities like the Labor Party did at the Vasse by-election by leaving that electorate without a candidate. Members opposite have walked away from regional communities. They should spend time to develop a comprehensive agricultural policy. We are the only party that has actually shown that community the respect it is due by putting some time and effort into an agricultural policy—not a bit of a cut-and-paste job or a bit of sugar-covered candy, like the \$30 million tier 3 package from the opposition. Hon Darren West talked about the infamous truck ride from Bruce Rock to Mundaring. Well done to Hon Mark McGowan—that is the one and only time he has been in the bush!

Hon Jim Chown interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: That is exactly right. He was walking around the Wagin Woolorama asking people what oats looked like—good farming stock —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! This is a time-limited debate. Hon Paul Brown has the call and we should extend him the courtesy by hearing him in silence.

Hon PAUL BROWN: One portion of that agricultural policy was the \$2 million infrastructure audit that sits along quite comfortably with the \$75 million that we have put there for an infrastructure fund. Through the election campaign and ever since, we have always said that when a business case is put to us, and if any deficiencies are identified through that infrastructure audit, we will happily apply the \$75 million or a portion thereof to tier 3 rail.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PAUL BROWN: No, the member had his chance. They put their sugar-coated candy out there for everyone to see and now it is my turn.

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Hon Jim Chown: On that matter, it still requires cabinet approval.

Hon PAUL BROWN: I will take that on board Hon Jim Chown. We have the money in our infrastructure fund. Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PAUL BROWN: Let us not forget that that \$300 million agricultural policy—that is \$270 million more than their sugar-coated bag of peanuts—has been adopted in full by the government. What was the agricultural policy of members opposite? It was \$30 million for tier 3 rail when Brookfield Rail was telling them that \$120 million would be required. Members opposite should not stand in this place and try to tell me how much sympathy and respect they have for our wheatbelt communities.

Two days ago the Wheatbelt Railway Retention Alliance and the Western Australian Farmers Federation were rallying here on the steps of Parliament. Farmers had chosen to get off their headers for the day to come in and show their displeasure at what they see as an injustice in their community. Well done to them for turning up—they were small in number, but well done to those who turned up. Who went out there and spoke to them about the possibility of relief? It was not Hon Ken Travers and it was not Hon Darren West, even though straight after the event Hon Darren West popped up on Facebook and said, “Only WA Labor has a plan to keep grain on rail.” Where is Labor’s plan?

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! The volume is increasing at a fast rate. Before we have another point of order on raised voices, I remind members of the decorum we usually uphold in this chamber. I give the call to Hon Paul Brown.

Hon PAUL BROWN: We did not see Hon Darren West jumping up to grab the microphone from those who were speaking and illustrate his plan for tier 3 and the survival of the grain industry. Instead, Mark McGowan hopped up there and trotted out the same tired, old one-liners that we have heard him talk about today about the infamous truck ride from Bruce Rock to Mundaring. That is the full extent of his knowledge about the wheatbelt in WA. He does not even know what an oat looks like! It was embarrassing to see him at Wagin Woolorama walking around and asking farmers what oats look like. That is the full extent of his knowledge. He then came up with this comprehensive agricultural policy. I can picture him now, rubbing his hands together and saying that they should throw \$30 million at the tier 3 problem, knowing full well that he would get comprehensively rolled at the election. He would have been thinking that he does not have time to develop an agricultural policy because he was too worried about choosing which colours he would use on the map of the MetroRail project. The only person who stood up at that rally —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PAUL BROWN: The only person who stood up at that rally on Tuesday and gave the grains industry and our wheatbelt communities any vision of hope was the Leader of the National Party, Terry Redman. He said quite clearly that if the Minister for Transport, Dean Nalder, could get Brookfield Rail, the lessee of the rail line, and Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, the company tasked with the major portion of our grain transport, together on common ground and identify parts of the rail system that they wanted to use and it could be deemed commercially viable, then we would look at applying royalties for regions money to solve that problem. That is a plan. Run out of the chamber, Hon Darren West, and put that on Facebook.

Recommendation 21 of the recent Economics and Industry Standing Committee report, “The Management of Western Australia’s Freight Rail Network” clearly states —

The Minister for Regional Development clarify whether Royalties for Regions funding can be made available for upgrades to the freight rail network and, if so, what process is in place to allow access to that funding.

Indeed we do have the process—it is a \$75 million infrastructure fund. Bravo to the standing committee for having the courage to do exactly what the Nationals have been asking for quite some time now; to put transparency out there for our regional communities, and for this place to understand the obligations of the government to our communities. Yesterday in this place we heard Hon Ken Travers, and Hon Darren West today, imply about improper influences that some legitimate companies have over our party by donating as part of our corporate sponsorship. Quite clearly, Hon Ken Travers has not taken the time to read the recent report. Finding 6 highlights the lack of transparency by members of Parliament and the cabinet in the rail lease amendments and the obligations to the state. That then highlights that although we entered into corporate sponsorship arrangements, we did that with no knowledge —

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Hon Ken Travers: Brendon knew. Hon Simon O'Brien admitted it to me.

Hon PAUL BROWN: No, he did not. He was not privy to it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon PAUL BROWN: We did that with no knowledge of the implications, just like Hon Ken Travers who has made comments in this place that he has no knowledge of the sponsorship and donations made by trade unions and industrial organisations to the Labor Party. I am sure that he does not formulate his policy around what donations he gets from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and many others—nor do we. I can speak for my colleagues when I say that we do not —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! Let us just take a minute to calm down. This is a time-limited debate and the member has only a few seconds left, so can we hear him out in silence.

Hon PAUL BROWN: I will conclude in the next few seconds, but the National Party's position statement during the 2013 election campaign stated quite clearly that there was a requirement for an examination of the tier 3 grain rail network for cost, productivity and efficiencies on a comparable basis with road, and an assessment of the operating and maintenance models of Brookfield Rail and CBH-Watco. When that comes to us, we will happily look at funding it through royalties for regions, just as Hon Terry Redman, the Leader of the National Party, said on the steps of Parliament on Tuesday when you guys stood up and said nothing.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I just wanted to let members know that three people have indicated an interest to speak on the list I have prepared—Hon Alanna Clohesy, Hon Simon O'Brien and Hon Mark Lewis—and now there is Hon Martin Aldridge. We have very limited time left, so members might want to consider sharing the load around.

HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan) [11.11 am]: I will indeed do that.

I am pleased to stand in support of this motion that calls on the Liberal-National government to support the grain industry and rural communities and reopen tier 3 rail lines. As we know, the Barnett government closed the tier 3 rail lines that carried grain from the Agricultural Region to the metropolitan grain bins. The closure of those tier 3 rails officially took effect on 1 July this year. We also know that that was despite a promise from the Barnett government prior to the last election to not close those tier 3 lines. Hon Paul Brown suggested in his contribution that the Nationals have not walked away from anything. I just flicked through my filing system and found a media release from Hon Terry Waldron in December 2012, in which Waldron backed the Nationals' grain freight network priority policy. I will let Hon Paul Brown have that, just so that he can actually see what his party promised.

Hon Ken Travers and Hon Darren West talked about the confusion and mismanagement that has surrounded this decision of the Barnett Liberal-National government—confusion reigns supreme. I will focus on who is really affected by this decision. We have heard that farmers have been negatively affected by this decision because they will have to pay more to cart their grain to the grain bins in the metropolitan region, but I also want to focus on the people living and working in East Metropolitan Region, especially those in the hills who will suffer greatly because of this decision. We know there will be increased truck movements on roads that are already suffering from safety issues and poor maintenance. The residents of the hills have already expressed their concerns and told the government that they are worried. The government can just deny, deny, deny that there will be increased truck movements. Of course, in June the minister denied, denied, denied in the other place that there would be increased truck movements. He said —

The closure of tier 3 railway lines will see zero extra truck movements in the metropolitan area.

Zero, zilch—none. In November he said —

I did say zero, and does the member know why I said zero? It is because I am actually correct on this.

Let us have a look at that. Last week, in front of the crowd, the minister said about 10 per cent of grain movements occurred on tier 3 rail. That 10 per cent of grain is about 1.7 million tonnes. If a truck carries about 55 tonnes, that is 31 000 movements of trucks for this harvest alone! That would be about 600 more truck movements a week, and that is only one-way. That is the trucks going down to the grain bins; it is not the trucks turning around and coming back. We are looking at 1 200 movements, yet the minister still says there will not be any extra truck movements. The increased truck movements, we know, will put communities at risk of greater road problems, greater congestion and serious, serious safety issues. The residents know that and are already concerned; the government knows that, but it is denying, denying, denying. I call on the government to make a decision to restore grain movement on tier 3 rail lines.

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HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [11.15 am]: As a former Minister for Transport, my attention was of course drawn to the Legislative Assembly's Economics and Industry Standing Committee report titled "The Management of Western Australia's Freight Rail Network". My attention, of course, has also been captured by some of the remarks from those opposite. I do not get a right of reply in the other house, but I certainly get a reply in this place, and in the brief time available to me I need to address certain things that have been said. I am concerned that much of the comment we have heard today and on other occasions has been weighted with pejorative expressions such as "secret deal" and "the government tried to cover its tracks on the talks". These sorts of terms are, from my unique viewpoint, quite unjustified, and they should not be allowed to continue unchallenged.

Moving on from a ministerial portfolio is a little like being a relinquishing foster parent; although one maintains a strong interest, one has no right to interfere in future decisions. Of course, one is also bound by public office not to disclose or discuss correspondence or other knowledge obtained when in such an office without the permission of the other party or as otherwise permitted by law. That is not secret dealing or trying to cover tracks any more than, for example, an offer to buy a property in connection with the resumption of land is some sort of secret deal. They are the same rules and behaviours that have been exhibited by every other Minister for Transport who has been responsible for the Public Transport Authority since 2000. Nonetheless, the release of correspondence by the Legislative Assembly committee gives me freedom to discuss some of these matters in a bit more detail. If anyone is interested in finding out what actually did happen in my brief two-year period in that office, I am more than happy to educate them.

There are a couple of key dates in all this, members. In 2006 there was the disintegration of the formerly integrated above and below rail operations. That ultimately made it easier for the so-called "uneconomic" test to be met. I will come back to that in a moment. In 2008 the deregulation of the wheat market occurred, and CBH began withdrawing its cross-subsidisation of storage and transport costs in marginal areas, and there was a noticeable pressure imposed on it to move from rail to road transport in many cases. In 2008—again in the time of the previous government—there was the Grain Infrastructure Group report. It has already been outlined by Hon Jim Chown that the report was reviewed by KPMG for the federal government and found to be wanting. That was one reason for the Public Transport Authority, in 2010, under my ministerial purview, commencing the compilation of a business case for both state and for the commonwealth governments, because of course we were seeking the active involvement of the commonwealth and its dollars in finding solutions for the problems of the day. Let me say this before I continue: in relation to correspondence released by the committee showing that I sought very strongly to hold the rail operator responsible for upgrades to the serviceability of the rail lines, it ultimately became apparent that under the terms of the lease the capacity for the minister to do that had expired six years after the commencement of the lease and I no longer had the capacity to compel the operator to do it. Instead, the operator could, if certain uneconomic criteria were met, surrender the lines back to the state together with the responsibility. I do not think that then, or now, there was a real desire for the government to go back into the railroad business, particularly by taking on isolated, frozen assets without any customers, and at that time without any prospect of customers, to make them viable. However, I did do certain things acting in concert with the Public Transport Authority and industry, which I worked with through the Strategic Grain Network Review Committee, and others. I want members to understand this: in the middle of 2009, at the initiative of the rail operator, lines had closed, further lines were set to close by December that year and further lines were going to close after that. It was through my actions, for which I take ministerial responsibility, that those lines were not closed and remained open. They remained open for years after I had left the office. That is the truth of the matter.

I have limited time to respond to all of the things that have been raised today, but I want to mention a couple of things. Hon Darren West is, I think, a grain grower and all his grain is transported from his property by road—all grain, every kernel of it, is moved by road at least once, unless, of course, he has a rail siding in his wheat paddock, which I doubt. That is another thing that people overlook in this scenario. Hon Brendon Grylls was slammed just now by Hon Ken Travers in a not very honourable and cowardly attack. What I reported to Hon Ken Travers and what I say to members now is that I admired the guts and integrity of Hon Brendon Grylls when I saw him stand up in his own electorate, as it then was, in the eastern wheatbelt and eyeball farmers and tell them, "You say you want railway, but if you can find 50c a tonne cheaper on road, you will be down that road, no matter how unfit for that purpose, in the middle of the night taking your wheat to market, rather than putting it on rail." I admired him for that. Hon Terry Redman has been mentioned in this debate with remarks attributed to him just the other day. I was not there to hear the context of those remarks but I will tell members this: cabinet has considered these matters in great detail. I have been the author of cabinet submissions. I am bound by cabinet confidentiality, but I can say that the cabinet made a decision in November 2010 and it was a very detailed decision. It was not an easy decision to get past the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee, Treasury and all the rest of it, because, of course, the party to this lease is not the Minister for

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Transport it is the Treasurer—he signs the lease and all its variations. The cabinet submission I put up for a rescue package to tide us through the next few of these critical years did go through all the processes. I will not seek to go through all the detail that was in it, but the cabinet submission was very, very comprehensive. I was reminded by my colleague Hon Robyn McSweeney that she remembers it very well because, God, I went on for a hell of a long time! The consultation on the cabinet submission was very wide and included specifically the Department of Agriculture and Food, of which Hon Terry Redman was minister. Although I am not in any position to table cabinet documents, the cabinet decision was advertised by media statement on 15 November 2010 under the names of Hon Colin Barnett, Hon Terry Redman and me. That was not the last time cabinet considered that matter either. I am also reminded that in October 2011, after my time as transport minister when I was doing something else, cabinet approved further funding for extend the operational life of another four of the tier 3 lines. Therefore, we have been active in this space and there is more to this story to tell.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I will give the call to Hon Mark Lewis because he stood up much earlier in the debate to seek the call than Hon Martin Aldridge. I am sorry I do not have time to give both the call.

HON MARK LEWIS (Mining and Pastoral) [11.26 am]: Thank you, Madam Deputy President. I apologise to Hon Martin Aldridge. I will be very brief. There has been some reference to safety in this debate that I do not think rings quite true with the facts. I know these facts have been on the public record because the minister has put them there clearly. I want to reiterate them because I do not think safety should be used as a political bouncing ball within this chamber. Fact one: trucks account for 10 to 15 per cent of movements on all roads, yet only account for 4.1 per cent of all incidents or accidents across WA, and that figure is four per cent in tier 3 rail areas.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon MARK LEWIS: In fact, there are fewer incidents and accidents in tier 3 rail areas compared with the average across the state. Fact two: \$280 million has been invested in the grain freight networks in the past five years. Fact three: 40 per cent of that has been invested in tier 3. Fact four: tier 3 rail accounts for less than 10 per cent of the grain grown in WA. Fact five: the investment in roads in tier 3 areas as opposed to rail was based on the recommendations from Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, WA farmers, local government and other industry bodies. As the statistics show, trucks are not the safety issue on regional roads. However, if we were to say that trucks were the safety issue, that issue would be at harvest—as we know, the time trucks bring the grain into the bins over those six or so weeks—not over the 10 to 12 weeks when it is being transferred to other bins. I do not think we should shy away from debate more generally on issues of tier 3 rail, but I think we should be dealing with the facts, particularly when it comes to the issue of safety. As I said earlier, I do not think that issue should be a bouncing ball across the political chambers and I get disturbed when these facts are used loosely in this instance. I take this opportunity to put those facts on the record.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [11.28 am]: I will speak quickly. I just want to make a couple of points about the comments of Hon Simon O'Brien. Hon Terry Redman was referring to the profit-sharing arrangements that were negotiated between Brookfield Rail and the Public Transport Authority. He was not talking about all the decisions of the rail lease; he was specifically referring to that point, which is a point that Hon Ken Travers has already misrepresented publicly. He will never let that pass because the opposition's job is not to listen to the facts.

The other thing that really saddens me is how the opposition continues to cheapen the really important issue of road safety. The opposition creates this emotive debate about grain trucks hitting school buses when that is so far from the truth, and it should hang its head in shame because of it.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.