

GREYHOUND AUSTRALIA BUS SERVICE, PERTH–BROOME

254. Hon PHIL EDMAN to the Minister for Transport:

I refer the minister to the government's ongoing dialogue with Greyhound Australia on its existing service from Perth to Broome. Can the minister please update the house on the negotiations with Greyhound Australia of its continued servicing of this route both now and into the future?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the honourable member for his question. I am pleased to advise that, after discussions between the Public Transport Authority and Greyhound Australia today, Greyhound Australia has committed to continuing to service the route until September, during which time further discussions will take place between the government and Greyhound on the route's long-term viability. Greyhound Australia is a private company and, like every other private company, is impacted upon by cost pressures and other externalities. Greyhound has previously indicated to this government, as it did to the last government, that the provision of services along this route at its current level is unsustainable. Under the former government, it reduced its services from seven days a week to five days a week, and more recently to four days a week. In light of decreasing patronage, Greyhound has had to make hard, and I am sure, reluctant business decisions.

At this time I would like to place on the public record the government's thanks to Greyhound Australia for its continued support to communities on the route, despite this reduction. No-one in this chamber is questioning Greyhound Australia's commitment to providing good services to regional Western Australia. However, this is just one issue in which cost pressures, falling passenger numbers and reality collide. I would note that the government has been trying to work through this issue with Greyhound. It might be helpful if some members opposite stopped playing politics and got out of the way.

Several members interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Mr President, I am addressing the Chair. The government will continue to represent the best public transport outcomes for the people of Western Australia as we work through this issue and others like it. I reiterate what I said on 19 March this year: my ministerial door is open to those who wish to come and discuss any difficulties that they are having. I hope that we can find some long-term solutions to the issue for Greyhound and for its customers. I will not be prejudicing the interests or the finances of the people of Western Australia to do it.