

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE — FREIGHT

264. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in job-creating and economic-driving infrastructure right across Western Australia and, in particular, in regional WA. Can the minister outline to the house how the \$200 million investment by the state and commonwealth governments in WA's freight rail network will improve efficiency, reduce freight costs, support jobs and support our agricultural sector, and how this government's approach compares with that of the previous Liberal–National government?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for the question.

Last week I made my way to Brookton to announce the joint spending of \$200 million on regional rail infrastructure in the state. This is an acknowledgement that rail plays a key role in not only metropolitan WA and for Metronet, but also for transporting freight across the state. Some members may not recall this, but let us go through it: it was the Liberal–National government that sold the regional freight business. It sold Westrail Freight for less than its value and the Nationals had their tummies tickled by the then Premier who gave the Nationals a few roads as a trade-off for selling the entire regional freight network. The government not only sold it, but also when it got back into government again, it closed down the rail lines. The government sold it and then closed down the rail lines. Of course, that has put enormous pressure on our roads. There have long been calls demanding that we work to get our regional rail back up to standard, so I am really pleased to be committing, together with the federal government, \$200 million for a range of projects. Members may know that this last harvest has been a record harvest. We believe those numbers will continue to be at those levels and higher in the future. It was with great pleasure to be there with Co-operative Bulk Handling and Arc Infrastructure last week in regional WA.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I saw you.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, you did a nice walk into the camera shot, you might have noticed!

We have committed \$22 million to improve the rail sidings at four CBH bins and another \$46 million to extend the rail sidings at seven additional bins. In some instances, that will mean that a train that used to take about eight hours to load will now take between two and three hours to load. That means enormous efficiencies in moving the freight across the network. We will also improve the capacity of the rail lines with an investment of \$60 million to upgrade the Midland line's main line between Carnamah and Mingenew that will increase the tonne axle loading from 16 tonnes to 19 tonnes and a very exciting investment of \$72 million towards the progressive recommissioning of the Narrogin to Kulin tier 3 rail line. Working with the regional resources industry, we will make sure that we can reopen lines for not only grain freight, but also the resources sector, because we believe that when we combine those two components, the business case is strong to have those rail lines reopened.

It is always interesting to know what the opposition says when we talk about regional rail. As I said, the Liberal–National government had no shame. It sold Westrail Freight and shut down the rail lines yet somehow, with more front than Myers, Liberal–National members are criticising us. I understand that the member for Moore is not here. I wish him well in his COVID recovery. He went onto my Facebook page to congratulate the federal National and Liberal Parties. Given that the WA National Party does not talk to the federal National Party, it is no wonder the member for Moore had to go onto my page to communicate with the federal National Party! He does not communicate with the federal National Party directly because the state and federal parties do not talk to each other, so he had to go onto my Facebook page to communicate with the federal National Party. Barnaby Joyce seems to be banned from WA because the National Party seems to think that would impact on its vote in regional WA.

Mr M. McGowan: So you're like Kissinger!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am the messenger.

The member for Moore went onto my Facebook page to communicate with the federal National Party. The member for Geraldton's predecessor, the federal National Party's candidate for Durack, Ian Blayney, was out there with a strange media release commenting about tier 3. Again, that is from a party that sold Westrail Freight and shut down the rail lines and is now questioning our commitment to regional rail. I will tell members what: it is there, it is funded and we will continue to work with regional communities to make real progress about how we move our freight around the state.