



# Millions more for grain rail and roads

NEARLY \$180 million of extra funding was announced by the state government last week to upgrade grain rail and grain roads in WA.

The new funding is in addition to the \$80 million allocated earlier this year by the Barnett government (\$50 million) and the federal government.

It will also secure the additional \$135 million committed in the 2010-11 federal budget and brings the total investment in the grain freight network to \$352 million over four years.

Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis, whose family grows grain in Bindi Bindi and Bruce Rock, said the funding confirmed the government's commitment to rural communities and its faith in the future of agriculture.

The funding includes \$187.9 million for re-sleeper works and rail siding upgrades on the state's most competitive grain freight lines (tier one and tier two lines); \$118.3 million for improvements and maintenance to Wheatbelt roads; \$14.6 million for a transition assistance package to ensure rail transport remains competitive with road; and \$500,000 for a study to investigate the options for a new rail link from the Avon to Albany line near Brookton to Kwinana.

"I travel extensively throughout the Mid West and Wheatbelt and one of the concerns which has been raised with me by both shire councils

and farmers during the past 12 months has been the shift of grain transport from rail to road," Mr Ellis said.

"I discussed this with the Premier during a recent one-to-one meeting and I am particularly pleased to see that there is a road funding package as part of the deal.

"This will make regional roads safer for local families, school buses and tourists and will take some of the road maintenance costs away from local government."

Road upgrades include Cunderdin to Quairading; Trayning to Kellerberrin and beyond Bruce Rock; Merredin to Nungarin; Brookton to Yealering and Corrigin; and southwards along the road towards Narrogin before connecting into the road towards Kulin and Kondinin to Narembeen.

Rail upgrades include McLevie to Albany through Goomalling, York, Brookton, Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning; Goomalling to Kalannie, Beacon and Mukinbudin; Wagin to Hyden and Newdegate.

Mr Ellis said the upgrades were win-win for regional communities, as they would make grain transport more efficient and less costly for farmers, while improving customer delivery times.

"After the first funding announcement earlier this year there was a reaction in some

quarters as to 'where's the rest?'" Mr Ellis said.

"Well here it is – we always did say the earlier funding was just the first stage in the program and I am delighted that the full picture is starting to emerge."

The plan follows recommendations from the Strategic Grain Network Committee and has the backing of industry.

However, Shadow Minister for Transport Ken Travers MLC said there were shires that were not happy with the decision that government would be closing tier three lines, which was a devastating blow on many communities in the Wheatbelt.

Mr Travers said road trains, school buses and cars would now be left to compete for limited space on roads that were simply not up to standard.

"The Barnett government claims that industry does not use rail are simply wrong, with the vast majority of grain in the tier three areas currently being moved by rail," he said.

"Road is receiving a massive undisclosed subsidy, but rail is expected to be full cost recovery

"WA Labor calls on the Barnett Grylls government to release all the financial modelling and analysis to show why the government decided to close the tier three line.

"It is a sad day that WA loses more rail lines."



Central Midlands & Coastal Advocate  
Thursday 25/11/2010  
Page: 1  
Section: General News  
Region: Moora WA Circulation: 15,000  
Type: Regional  
Size: 385.02 sq.cms.  
Frequency: ---T---

Brief: PARLWA-WA1  
Page 2 of 2

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**Funding:** Westnet Rail general manager Paul Larson, Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis and Transport Minister Simon O'Brien at the grain rail upgrade launch at Katanning last week.