



Boost for re-sleeping program



Spike: WestNet Rail chief executive Paul Larsen, Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis, Minister for Transport Simon O'Brien and Agricultural Region MLC Jim Chown at the celebratory silver spike at Katanning.

TRANSPORT Minister Simon O'Brien said last week's announcement of a grain freight network upgrade had special significance for the Great Southern Railway line.

Speaking in Katanning last Wednesday, Mr O'Brien said the \$178.8 million state government funding package meant the current re-sleeping program on the Great Southern line could continue uninterrupted.

"More than \$13.5 million has been invested in the re-sleeping program since the government this year announced interim funding for the network upgrade," he said.

"That has enabled WestNet Rail, which has invested more than \$8.25 million as well, to begin laying sleepers on stage one of the upgrade, from Wagin to Redmond, near Albany.

"The new funding package ensures this continues, as well as stage two from Avon to Narrogin."

The minister inspected works at Katanning, accom-

panied by Agricultural Region MLCs Jim Chown and Brian Ellis.

Nearly 400 kilometres of rail lines in the Albany zone will be upgraded under the package, including the Wagin-Newdegate and Hyden-Lake Grace lines at a cost of more than \$72 million.

Overall, more than 1200 kilometres of railway through the Wheatbelt regions will be upgraded at a cost of \$187.9 million.

The state government's funding initiative also locks in a federal government contribution of \$135 million.

"Combined with the state's contribution earlier this year, it brings the total investment in the grain freight network to \$352 million over four years – the biggest upgrade of the network in 20 years," Mr O'Brien said.

"This is an unprecedented level of investment in the grain freight network and demonstrates the government's commitment to the long-term continuity of the grain industry and rural communities."