



Grain harvest to stay on rails, minister welcomes decision

AGRICULTURE Region MLC Brian Ellis has welcomed the State Government's decision not to close rail lines this season.

The State Government last week committed to funding 50 per cent of the \$43.5 million cost of re-sleepering the Avon to Albany rail line. The other 50 per cent will be sought from the Federal Government.

In the interim, a Transitional Assistance Package of \$6.9million has been allocated for deliveries on rail lines which are currently uneconomic.

"The assistance package will help keep grain on the rail for this year's harvest, and if farmers are genuine about maintaining their rail option they should be encouraged to participate," Mr Ellis said.

Mr Ellis said he also welcomes the \$0.5million allocation for preliminary upgrade work on the Chester Pass Road which links the Southern Wheatbelt to the port of Albany.

"I am delighted that, despite all the leaked comments about rail closures, the Minister has kept his promise that no rail lines will be closed in the short term and is keen to engage with

the Federal Government to ensure grain rail viability in the long term," Mr Ellis said.

"It is now up to the Federal Government, which introduced grain deregulation which has affected grain handling and marketing, to make sure that they match the re-sleepering funding.

"I call on WA Labor politicians – especially Alannah MacTiernan who has been so outspoken about rail issues and has Federal ambitions – to put the pressure on their Federal colleagues to get this funding in place in the lead-up to the election."

Mr Ellis said that now the Strategic Grain Network Committee's report has been released, he will look with interest at any recommendations for future work on the Geraldton rail line and associated roads.

"I am also keen to examine the proposal for a future specialised 'inland port' rail hub at Brookton as part of a dedicated grain rail line between Merredin, Brookton and Kwinana," Mr Ellis said.



Welcome news: Brian Ellis MLC, member for the Agricultural Region, has welcomed the decision not to close rail lines.