

RAIL BRIDGE — BEELIAR

Grievance

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [9.38 am]: My grievance to the Minister for Transport is about the disintegration of the rail bridge on Beeliar Drive in Beeliar. Before I go into my presentation, I will lay these documents on the table for the rest of today's sitting. The minister will receive these documents in two seconds.

[The documents were tabled for the information of members.]

I am sure that the minister is aware of this issue because yesterday I spoke to his policy officer and gave the background to my grievance. The bridge is located on Beeliar Drive in Beeliar, between Stock Road and Cockburn Central. It is the rail freight bridge that links Midland and Kwinana–Rockingham. The sections of the bridge that the minister will see in the attached photos have been crumbling since 2011—in fact, the damage probably started before 2011. I have taken up the issue with the City of Cockburn, Brookfield Rail and the Public Transport Authority, through the minister. Although the damage to the bridge is on the fascia of the wall, as the minister can see, it has nevertheless left the reinforcing of the structure of the bridge exposed to the elements for some three years now. If it is left as it is, not only is it very unsightly, as the minister can see, but also it will ultimately damage the core structure of the left-hand side of the bridge, as can be seen in the photographs.

As I have said, that bridge is on the rail freight network that carries trains to and from the goldfields, up north and to Kwinana–Rockingham. The types of products carried on trains past those suburbs and through the southern suburbs and across the bridge through to the terminal in Rockingham are petrol and diesel, sulphuric acid, sodium cyanide, quicklime, iron ore and cereals and grains. I put to the minister that since the introduction of trains carrying iron ore to Kwinana—the heavier longer trains—the damage started to occur and the fascia of the wall started to peel away. I wrote a letter to the minister on 20 November 2012, and a response came back from Michael Buba, the principal policy advisor for the then Minister for Transport, dated 11 December 2012. The then minister said that because it is part of the rail freight network lease, Brookfield is responsible for the upkeep of the rail bridge. I know that Brookfield has also taken up the issue with the City of Cockburn and has tried to get the City of Cockburn to take responsibility for this. The City of Cockburn, quite rightly, has said that it is not its responsibility—it is Brookfield Rail's. The PTA has also indicated that the responsibility belongs to Brookfield Rail. The final sentence in the third paragraph of the former minister's letter states that the Public Transport Authority is advised that both parties are currently in discussions to repair the decorative wall. That was two years ago and it remains exactly as it is now.

I have spoken twice to Paul Larsen, the chief executive officer of Brookfield Rail, about the bridge. He is aware of the damage to the bridge and he said that he would get onto it. Nothing has occurred. I have also raised the matter very recently with the PTA, which advised me that responsibility, of course, lies with Brookfield Rail and that it is up to it to begin the process of repairing the bridge. As the minister can see, I have also attached an article from the *Fremantle Herald* titled “Rumbling, crumbling, bumbling”, which outlines the way in which the various parties are dealing with the repairs to the bridge.

The matter has just dragged on for over three years now. As the minister can see, it is an unsightly mess on a very busy road that links Stock Road to Cockburn Central in a rapidly growing area for new homes and families. People who drive past the bridge ask me on a regular basis when the bridge is going to be fixed. I have now had to bring it to the Minister for Transport's attention here in Parliament to ask the same question: when will the bridge be fixed? I acknowledge that the responsibility lies with Brookfield Rail. Brookfield Rail is not undertaking its responsibilities, as it should, to repair that bridge. It now lies with the Minister for Transport, and the government as the ultimate owner of the land and the one signatory to the lease—not the minister personally, but the government—to enforce that lease and to ensure that Brookfield does the right thing and repairs the bridge, which is part of its 49-year lease with the government. I ask that the minister put pressure on Brookfield Rail to repair it immediately.

MR D.C. NALDER (Alfred Cove — Minister for Transport) [9.45 am]: I thank the member for Cockburn for raising this grievance, particularly for at least giving me a heads-up, which gave me an opportunity to raise my awareness of the issue so that I could respond appropriately this morning. I understand the member is referring to the freight rail bridge that crosses over Beeliar Drive near the shopping complex in Beeliar. This bridge was built in 2003 and 2004 by the City of Cockburn as it wanted grade separation at this location. The rail infrastructure is leased to Brookfield Rail, and, as the member for Cockburn says, the maintenance of that rail bridge is primarily its responsibility.

I am advised by Brookfield Rail that the bridge is safe and that there is no risk of any structural failure. The damage the member has described—I have seen the photos the member has provided this morning—represents a rail safety risk, the government would be able to exercise powers to enforce the correction of any defect.

However, I understand that the walls covered in murals are, in fact, decorative and have no impact on the structural integrity of the bridge—even though the facade has obviously deteriorated. I am advised that the City of Cockburn built these walls and has conducted works in the past to repair them. There has been a lot of correspondence with the city over the years regarding the facade issues. The west facade failed first, and I am advised that the shire funded its repair. The east-side facade has now failed, and I am advised that Brookfield Rail has written to the city telling it that it is the city's responsibility to fix it. At Brookfield's request, it has been fenced off. I understand that amenity is a great part of a local community, and, obviously, it is a nice place to live when things look nice. To let things deteriorate the way they have is unpleasant for the local community and is not something that we should accept.

Although the state government does not directly have control over the issue the member raises, I will call a meeting between Brookfield Rail, the Cockburn city and the Public Transport Authority to see whether we can resolve this matter and improve the visual amenity of that area. I would be happy to keep the member informed about the progress of the matter.

The member has said all the things that I was going to say; I was going to say more. As the member indicated, it is between Brookfield Rail and the city. I think we have a responsibility to try and achieve a better outcome than has been achieved to this point, so we are hopeful. I will instigate a meeting, but I cannot promise an outcome. We will carry on trying to achieve an outcome. If I get some sense that it is affecting the integrity and safety of the rail bridge, I will definitely intervene. If it is about the facade and beautification only, that will be a little more difficult to resolve.

Mr F.M. Logan: Minister, as you can see from the photographs, the wall fascia was put up as part of the construction of that the bridge originally. That fascia was not built by the City of Cockburn. The City of Cockburn has repaired it once or twice when there was slight cracking. What it is saying now is that that is major damage to the bridge, and it is not paying. It is Brookfield's—it has to pay. I have raised this over and again with the City of Cockburn. It has drawn a line in the sand and said that it is not our bridge; they have to repair it.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I became aware of this issue only in the last 24 hours. I acknowledge that it has been in the department before. I will take an interest in the outcomes of these meetings. I do have expectations that Brookfield Rail will behave as a good corporate citizen.

We need to understand who is specifically responsible for looking after this and it might require both parties to come together. We will look into it and I will keep the member informed of progress.