

RAIL FREIGHT SYSTEM, INVESTMENT AND TRUCKING OF DANGEROUS GOODS

294. Hon Jim Scott to the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
- (1) How much financial investment has been allocated to the freight rail system since the freight division of Westrail was sold?
  - (2) What are the forms of investment that have taken place and what are the sources of this investment?
  - (3) Did the previous Government promise that the sale of Westrail's freight division would result in additional private investment and innovation?
  - (4) Is the Minister aware that a Wesfarmers subsidiary is proposing to truck dangerous goods, sodium cyanide, from Kwinana to Fremantle Port?
  - (5) Does an operative rail line exist between the Kwinana industrial area and the Fremantle Port?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD replied:

1. The lease with ARG specifies performance standards for the network, not expenditure amounts. The Government has not been advised of the actual financial amounts invested by the Australian Railroad Group (ARG) in the rail freight system since the sale.
2. Since the sale, ARG has made the following investments:
  - completion of the rehabilitation of the Kalgoorlie to Esperance Railway line (primarily resleepering, with some rerailing and reballasting);
  - construction of the new rail spur to service the Albany Plantation Export Company (APEC) woodchip mill near Albany (with Government support for interest costs);
  - extension of 8 passing loops on the interstate line to permit the free movement of 1800 metre trains;
  - commencement of replacement of timber sleepers with concrete sleepers between Jaurdi and Bonnie Vale on the east-west line (with \$18 million Commonwealth Government contribution to a \$45 million project);
  - continuation of the upgrades to the grain lines as part of the Grain Line Strengthening Plan commenced by Westrail;
  - commencement of resleepering and rehabilitation of the Worsley line;
  - expenditure on process based interlocking to replace the life expired signalling at Midland and Forrestfield;
  - commencement of optic fibre installation from Kalgoorlie to Bunbury;
  - purchase of additional grain wagons and woodchip wagons.

The Government has also approved \$53 million expenditure for the rail component of the Geraldton Southern Transport Corridor.
3. The previous Government stated that private ownership of the freight business would lead to the introduction of operating efficiencies, growth of, and investment in, the business.
4. Australian Gold Reagents Pty Ltd, a joint venture between Wesfarmers CSBP Limited and Coogee Chemicals Pty Ltd, is seeking to transport the solid form of sodium cyanide from Kwinana to Fremantle Port for export. Before this freight movement can occur, approval of the Department for Environmental Protection is required.
5. Yes, an operating rail line exists between Kwinana and North Quay at Fremantle Port. However, between Fremantle and North Fremantle, this railway is used for frequent passenger services, which places some constraints on the capacity and utilisation of the line for freight purposes.