

SOUTH WEST FREIGHT RAILWAY

12. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

I refer to the article in *The West Australian* about the south west freight railway. Will the minister tell us the real story?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for Collie-Wellington, who has been a great help to us in our work to rescue the railway line that runs between Manjimup and Bunbury. Firstly, the real underlying threat to this rail line has arisen from the botched privatisation undertaken by the previous government

Mr P.D. Omodei: Why don't you buy it back?

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The members for Avon and Warren-Blackwood are, of course, very touchy about this because during their time in government they were the great proponents - the great spruikers - of that privatisation. It is very interesting to consider some of the comments made by the member for Warren-Blackwood, who, in particular, came into this house and talked about that fantastic privatisation. He said rail freight would see increased efficiency and flexibility, lower freight rates, higher capital expenditure, network extension, on-rail competition and market growth. We know that none of those promises was met by that privatisation.

In fact, privatisation was undertaken at fire-sale prices for a level that did not -

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call to order the Leader of the National Party for the first time.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: It is very painful for members opposite to be confronted with the reality of their botched privatisation.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the first time.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Taxpayers have been left with a debt that is costing \$25 million a year to service, while absolutely none of the benefits of privatisation is accruing. However, the government has stepped into the breach and put together rescue packages for this rail line. I am very pleased at the work that we have done to pioneer the movement of logs on our rail line and that we now have agreement with the industry that rail freight will be the way of the future. We have backed up that planning with a \$10.3 million investment in the infrastructure that will enable us to develop an intermodal terminal at North Greenbushes and direct carting of logs from North Greenbushes into the Bunbury port. Once all the planning processes are in place we expect this work to be finalised by the end of the year.

Far from our presiding over the demise of rail, we have actively sought to rescue this rail line and correct the mistakes of the previous government.