

AVONLINK SERVICE — DISCONTINUANCE

893. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the petitions presented to the house by the members for Central Wheatbelt and Moore strongly advocating for the continuation of the *AvonLink* rail service and to the Nationals' newsletter that proclaims that negotiations are underway to continue this service.

- (1) What negotiations are underway for the continuation of the *AvonLink* rail service?
- (2) Has the use of royalties for regions funding been proposed to subsidise this service?

Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:

- (1)–(2) It is a hard question.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean!

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: It is a tricky question. Let us go back. The Public Transport Authority was required to make some operational savings to achieve some broader targets that the government set. That meant that some services in regional Western Australia were trimmed or cut. We have previously discussed one in this place—that is, the bus service that passed through Collie, Boyup Brook and the like. Due to the good work of the representatives from Boyup Brook, and some input from the member, some changes were made.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

Mr T.R. BUSWELL: We are still looking at some more changes in that particular area.

Of course, the member for Central Wheatbelt and the member for Moore tabled petitions in this place, I think, last week. I have had discussions with them as they have made representations on behalf of their local communities, as is entirely appropriate. What is the outcome of those discussions? The outcome of those discussions is that those two members have been able to deliver a wonderful outcome for their local communities, as good local members should; that is, that service will be retained. That service will be retained initially for a period of six months while the PTA and the Wheatbelt Development Commission work through the funding solution that will be required to not only retain the existing service to the Avon Valley, but also perhaps expand it. It would be expected that we will work with the development commission, as is entirely appropriate, to look at funding models for the future. I thank the member very much indeed for his question, because, of course, it has given me an opportunity to reflect on the good work done by the member for Central Wheatbelt and the member for Moore in representing their communities. Indeed, member for Collie–Preston, I signed letters to those members of Parliament and the minister this morning. I thank the member for Collie–Preston very much for the question, and I look forward to the supplementary question.