

WESTRAIL FREIGHT SALE, MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED PRIOR TO COMPLETION

**403. Hon TOM STEPHENS to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the minister's statements during yesterday's urgency motion that the matters that must be addressed prior to the completion of the contracts are currently being progressed and that the administrative arrangements regarding the remaining Westrail freight debt are still being finalised. Will the minister advise what are the outstanding matters that must be addressed and what are the administrative arrangements regarding the debt?

**Hon M.J. CRIDDLE replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. The matters to be addressed prior to completion, to which I referred yesterday, are primarily administrative matters to ensure the smooth transfer of responsibility from the Western Australian Government Railways Commission to the Australian Railroad Group Pty Ltd. Examples include completing the documentation for the safety accreditation of the Australian Railroad Group as a Western Australian railway owner-operator; completing the calculation of staff entitlements for transferring staff and making arrangements for the payment of their transfer payments and leave payouts when selected; adjusting business accounts to ensure proper allocation of assets and liabilities between the WAGR and the ARG; completing the transfer of ownership documents for specific assets; and making and publishing the transfer order in the *Government Gazette*, vesting relevant assets in the purchaser and ensuring liabilities are formally assumed by the purchaser. They are just normal occurrences in an ongoing business.

A working group consisting of the WAGR, the Department of Transport and Treasury is examining the future funding for the WAGR, including treatment of the remaining debt which includes passenger service specific debt as well as residual debt from the freight business. I anticipate that this will be addressed within the context of the overall state budget; thus, questions on the detail of the arrangements should be directed to the Treasurer.

In the meantime members can be assured that the WAGR will continue to provide high quality passenger services without interruption both before and after the settlement of the sale of the freight elements of its business.