

KIMBERLEY FLOODS — TRANSPORT LINKS

8. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Transport:

I have a supplementary question. Can the minister give me an understanding of when the barge she spoke about will actually be installed and whether it will be able to handle all the road trains that operate in the north?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

As I said, the preliminary work is happening now and trials are happening this week. In relation to guarantees of what can be transported when, it really depends on the weather, the river levels and also the tracks leading to and from the barge from both sides. We are talking about new areas that we are cutting into. We are working with the local Aboriginal groups to get the necessary approvals as well. We are working to move people initially and then we will be looking at freight. Initially, it will be about moving people and making sure that we can connect communities again and enable people to reach their motor vehicles. That work is underway now. There are daily meetings. Every day, there are different challenges in relation to the water levels and rain. It is very hard to predict. I will not stand here and tell the member exactly what will be moved on what day, because it is the wet season. As I said, we do not normally do this because the weather is very unpredictable in the wet season. We cannot give guarantees, but we are working very hard and the teams on the ground are working extremely hard to get the Kimberley reconnected.