

TIER 3 RAIL LINES — CLOSURE

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

I refer to the impending closure of the tier 3 rail lines on 30 June, even though the government made an election promise to keep all viable lines open.

- (1) Is the minister aware of comments by Brookfield Rail CEO, Paul Larsen, that the time line for closure of tier 3 is government policy?
- (2) Will the minister extend the life of these lines by providing funding for them to remain open for another six months so that the Economics and Industry Standing Committee can complete its report into these rail lines and the current harvest can be cleared?
- (3) Why has the minister broken his promise?

Mr D.C. NALDER replied:

- (1)–(3) We have talked about this issue in the house a number of times. This is a contractual agreement between two parties—Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd and Brookfield Rail. We have little opportunity to extend that. That is a decision that will be made between CBH and Brookfield Rail. They have been before the Economic Regulation Authority, and its decision was expected to be handed down in April but has been deferred until the end of this month, which has made it difficult for CBH and Brookfield to reach a decision. It is not the position of government to interfere with that process, particularly while it is before the court. There is very little we can do. We would rather see the railways remain open. However, this government has put \$120 million into regional road funding to ensure that those freight routes can handle the movement of trucks. After speaking to CBH, I am aware that it has been working very hard to get as much of the grain shifted as possible. I am hopeful that the two parties will eventually achieve a positive outcome.