

**ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S FREIGHT RAIL NETWORK**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 2014**

**SESSION ONE**

**Members**

**Mr I.C. Blayney(Chair)  
Mr F.M. Logan (Deputy Chair)  
Mr P.C. Tinley  
Mr J. Norberger  
Mr R.S. Love**

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**Hearing commenced at 9.06 am****Mr DESMOND SNOOK****Executive Director, Road Network Services, Main Roads Western Australia, examined:****Mr PASCAL FELIX****Director, Heavy Vehicle Operations, Main Roads Western Australia, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Good morning. On behalf of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee, I thank you for your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into the management of Western Australia's freight rail network. You have been provided with a copy of the committee's specific terms of reference. At this stage I would like to introduce myself and the other members of the committee here today. I am the chair, Ian Blayney, and next to me is Jan Norberger and Shane Love. We are expecting Peter Tinley in a while. Hon Fran Logan is an apology. The Economics and Industry Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking witnesses to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard is making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you provide the full title for the record. Before we proceed to the inquiry's specific questions we have for you today, I need to ask you the following: have you completed the "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Did you receive and read the information for witnesses briefing sheet provided with the "Details of Witness" form today?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today's hearing?

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Do you have an opening statement for us this morning?

**Mr Snook:** No.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** As we know, Main Roads was a member of the Strategic Grain Network Review Committee. We understand that the strategic grain network review report was based on a number of assumptions that underlie the modelling and recommendations. We have been told by a number of parties that many of those assumptions are no longer valid or accurate or true. We also understand that they form the basis of government strategy on road and rail capital investments for the WA grain industry supply chain. With that in mind, do the findings of the strategic grain network report remain valid today? Does the document provide an adequate basis for decision-making on road and rail capital investment in the grain freight regions?

[9.10 am]

**Mr Snook:** Neither I nor Pascal were involved in the preparation of, on behalf of Main Roads, the strategic grain network review report. The work that was done with that committee in developing improvements for the road network was all based on that strategic grain network review, as you said. The works that have been commenced a few years ago, to do all the construction work—all the construction work is based on that work. I am not in a position to say whether or not how relevant the conditions today are compared with that review in 2009.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** One of the key assumptions was in and around diesel price. The strategic review made the assumption that diesel would stay at around \$1.00 a litre, which is obviously clearly not the case, making road transport significantly more expensive. We have heard from a number of people and bodies that have come before the committee that CBH buying its own rolling stock was an overnight instantaneous game changer. That happened fairly closely after the handing down of the review. You are talking about works being done now or 2011, 2012 and 2013; but, if I am not mistaken, the rolling stock was bought in 2009 or 2010. Even then that was considered a huge game changer—the rise in diesel costs. We have been told categorically that so many of the underlying assumptions on which the strategic review recommendations were based have changed. Should we still be using the report that was handed down to make investment decisions on rail and road?

**Mr Snook:** From a Main Roads point of view, we had people who participated in that review, but the carriage and leadership of the review was with the Department of Transport. That is really a question you would need to ask the Department of Transport, not Main Roads.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The SGNR noted \$320 million worth of investment in road corridor upgrades. It says it was to complement the long-term rail network, including roads not fit-for-purpose for use by heavy grain haulage trucks. Is the \$320 million an accurate figure as far as Main Roads is concerned? How much was allocated to Main Roads and how much was allocated to local government? How much has been spent to date?

**Mr Snook:** From a Main Roads point of view, we have been delivering a \$118 million program.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** So of the \$320 million, Main Roads was allocated \$118 million?

**Mr Snook:** Yes; Main Roads has been delivering a \$118 million program. The split in the funding was \$51 million for state roads and \$67 million for local roads.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Where is the remaining \$202 million?

**Mr Snook:** I do not know. Main Roads was delivering the \$118 million. The Department of Transport is the one to speak to about the \$320 million.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Just to confirm, all that has been allocated to you is \$118 million.

**Mr Snook:** Correct.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** And you have to share that between yourselves, for the roads that you are responsible for, and with local government?

**Mr Snook:** Correct.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** How much has been expended to date?

**Mr Snook:** Most of the expenditure for state roads has occurred. To the end of May, \$50 million had been spent on state roads and \$51 million on local roads, which makes a total of \$102 million spent so far.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There is not much left.

**Mr Snook:** No. The plan is that all expenditure will be completed during 2014–15, so over the next financial year.

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**Mr R.S. LOVE:** We have been told by local governments that the costs they face to maintain their roads are quite excessive due to grain truck traffic on their roads and other traffic. The SGNR report did a revision of some of the heavy vehicle access policies to reduce the number of routes that grain trucks might travel on. What work has been done to plan out in a strategic sense where the traffic should be flowing? How do you propose to carry that to fruition?

**Mr Snook:** As part of the plan, there was identification of the strategic routes that would be taken on state roads and local roads. I have some maps I can give the committee, if that is suitable. Should the rail lines discontinue operation, the map shows in red the routes that the grain would be taken by truck to the nearest rail point. That is the strategic plan as to which roads would be affected by the discontinuation of the tier 3 rail lines. Doing that led to the investment of money in those roads that are marked in red.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** What do you do to monitor the “ground truth”, in trying to understand whether the traffic is indeed flowing given that some of them have not closed; some have and others have reduced operations where they have had road campaigns? Do you think that those assumptions or plans are still valid; if not, what implications will that have on maintenance costs for some of the local governments in that area?

**Mr Snook:** From Main Roads’ point of view, as I have said before, the program of improvements that we have put in place, which commenced in 2010—the planning that went into that—we are satisfied that those are the correct improvements that needed to be made. Of course if the tier 3 rail lines are eventually discontinued, we will be there. We will monitor the roads and the traffic that is going on those roads. We will also be talking to the local governments there as well, so we will monitor it. If, for some reason, there are some unpredicted changes there, we will make an assessment to see if those changes of the truck numbers are material changes that are likely to make an effect. We will have to work out what we need to do as a response to that, meaning: is there some wear on other roads that we did not predict, in which case we will need to take some action.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Coming back to what we said before: the SGNR recommended that Main Roads would be given \$320 million. You have been given \$118 million to share between yourselves and the local government. In light of that, could you maybe update us on what the current status is of the Brookton strategy?

**Mr Snook:** No, I am not aware of what the status is of the Brookton strategy.

[9.20 am]

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Obviously, one of the key underpinning components of the Brookton strategy is the successful upgrade of the road network as well as a few other upgrades and high-speed bin-loading facilities and the like. Perhaps maybe they are just focusing on the aspect that Main Roads would be responsible for. Are you comfortable that all the upgrades that the Brookton strategy required from Main Roads have been completed?

**Mr Snook:** As I said before, we have been provided with a \$118 million program. As I have explained, the delivery of that program is going very well. It will be completed by the end of 2014–15.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** I appreciate that, but how does that marry up with what the SGNR would have required and recommended Main Roads undertake in order to achieve your component of the Brookton strategy?

**Mr Snook:** I do not have the detailed information about that report that you are speaking of, so I really cannot make a comment on that.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Maybe we can put that on notice.

**Mr Snook:** Yes; happy to do that.

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**The CHAIR:** WALGA commissioned Cardno to develop a local government policy framework relating to the grain freight task on local government roads. This network route resulting from the study confirms and expands the local road network described in the SGNR. What has been your response to the Cardno study?

**Mr Snook:** I do not know the details of the Cardno study, I am afraid, so I will have to take that one on notice as well.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Following on from that, we have heard in this committee from local government and others that the part of Abernethy Road that runs through the Shire of Kalamunda is classified as a local road which means it obviously falls outside your jurisdiction—not out of your interest but out of your remit. Given the level of heavy traffic that uses this road, can you explain why such a road remains a responsibility of local government?

**Mr Snook:** I will make a broad explanation of that. In 1995 was the last review of the allocation of roads between state and local government. There was a review done at that time.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sorry, when?

**Mr Snook:** It was approximately 1995. Out of that, there was liaison between Main Roads and local government. Out of that an allocation of roads through the state and local governments was made. There has not been any major revision since then, although from time to time there are some movements of local roads. At the time that work was done, Abernethy Road did not have the amount of development that is along there now.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** It is some time since 1995.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** It is almost two decades.

**Mr Snook:** Yes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Has the shire made application to Main Roads for consideration of bringing it in?

**Mr Snook:** I am not aware if it has.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Can we put that on notice, Mr Chair, and get back to us?

Following on from that, are you aware of any other local roads that might fall into the same category as Abernethy Road, taking a lot of through-traffic, particularly heavy traffic around the metro area?

**Mr Snook:** There would be Canning Mills Road.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Similar?

**Mr Snook:** That would be similar. Off the top of my head, I cannot give you any others.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Can you explain why there has been such a distance since the last review, since 1995?

**Mr Snook:** No, I cannot.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Do you have another one scheduled? If you say to me you are going to do one next year, we can obviously assume that you do one every two decades, but if you tell me you are going to do one in 11 years, it is three decades. What is generally a trigger or the prompt for you to undertake one of these network-wide reviews?

**Mr Snook:** I cannot give you that explanation. I would have to take that on notice, I am afraid.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I might put that to the PTA.

**Mr Snook:** Not PTA.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** They are just as qualified to answer as you are, by the sounds of it!

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**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Perhaps you might just explain a little bit of the role that you undertake with local governments throughout the regions, because although Main Roads is responsible for main roads, you also have a role, through the regional road groups, in helping to fund local government. It is our understanding from the reports that WALGA have given us that local governments in that region are under a fair bit of stress already. I think some of the eastern wheatbelt areas, to meet their road preservation level, would have to spend the equivalent of 104 per cent of their rates, in addition to the state money and roads to recovery money they get. Can you just explain the background of your involvement with that, and also whether or not you have concerns about the ongoing maintenance and the ability of local governments out there to undertake that ongoing maintenance if we shift from rail to road?

**Mr Snook:** Main Roads is the organisation that manages the state funding for roads that is given to local governments for their road improvements, so Main Roads supervises the grant program. Part of the way that works is that Main Roads provides the administrative support for the regional road groups. Each particular regional road group has individual local governments represented on it. As to the funding that Main Roads provides, there is a variety of sources: there are direct grants, road project grants and other forms. The regional road groups are responsible for allocating the bulk of the money that is provided for road project grants to that particular region, and then the regional road group distributes that to the individual local governments.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Through that process, you must have a very good understanding of the road preservation needs of each of those areas and local governments, not just in the Main Roads roads but also the local government inventory. Perhaps you would be so bold as to give an opinion on the likely effect of increased traffic on the ability of those roads to be maintained in their current state, given the current funding.

**Mr Snook:** With those particular roads that are predicted to get the additional traffic, if the tier 3 rail line is to be discontinued, the purpose of the \$118 million that I have spoken about—in particular the local government component of that, or the component that goes to the local roads—is meant to look after those local roads.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** But that increases the inventory of local government, which then increases the preservation effort needed to keep that in a good condition. Again, is there any thought about the ongoing maintenance costs of these and the ability of local government in those areas to meet that?

[9.30 am]

**Mr Snook:** There will be a requirement for ongoing maintenance. If there is additional truck traffic on the roads, then there is a requirement for additional maintenance, compared with what there is now. But as part of the work that came out for the funding, there was an allocation of a nomination of \$3.5 million per year for additional road maintenance on the roads that were affected. That funding for maintenance has actually been taken up in the construction work that has been done, because there was a need for a bit of extra money there. That was a total of \$14 million out of the \$118 million, so that has been put as construction. If, in fact, those rail lines are discontinued and additional trucks go on those roads, there will be a requirement for some additional maintenance and that will be something that Main Roads looks at if the additional trucks go on the road.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Mr Snook, thank you for that. I suppose, with all due respect, that the extra trucks are due to arrive in about five days. What modelling has been done to date? Is this going to be one of those ones where you are going to look at it in 10 or 20 years? As of 30 June, those tier 3 rail lines will cease to operate and we will have those extra trucks on the road. You have metropolitan councils—I am really just backing up what Shane said—that, on average, spend about 19 per cent of their rate revenue on roads, so about one-fifth. We also have regional and wheatbelt councils saying that for them to be able to maintain the road network, they are going to have to spend 104 per cent. Clearly, that is ridiculous; they are just not in a position to raise that revenue through their rates to maintain the road network. What modelling has Main Roads done to identify

that that is looming? Also, what recommendations has Main Roads given to government in relation to what is likely going to be required in regards to top-up funding?

**Mr Snook:** If the tier 3 rail lines are discontinued, Main Roads has modelled what additional truck traffic is likely to go onto those red roads on the map. If the grain was moved every day of the year, then, on average, per day per year, there is about an additional 30 to 40 truck movements on those roads. That, by itself, is not a very large impact on that road network. If, in fact, those additional trucks go onto those roads, there is time for us to work with the local governments and actually observe what is happening on the road.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** That is great, thank you. To summarise: is it fair to say that it is the opinion of Main Roads that WALGA's report is inaccurate and that their 104 per cent figure may be miscalculated or misaligned?

**Mr Snook:** Our view is that, as I have said, there will be a need for additional maintenance if you put additional trucks on the road, but the number of additional trucks, as I have said, is about 40 per day, so we do not quite understand the level of the additional maintenance that WALGA is saying.

**The CHAIR:** I think one of the concerns is that the trucks will not be spread evenly across the year, and the other one is that with the freeing up of the market and the elimination of the single desk, there will be more trucks. Marketers want to get their grain onto a ship within six months, so that will mean building more trucks moving in the winter months, which is when soils are wet and there is more chance of damage to the roads. So I think that is a factor that is in WALGA's calculations as well.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The committee has heard evidence that some of the roads that heavy transport vehicles are currently using are not suitable for that type of traffic. I will give two examples. One is the Cunderdin–Hyden road is not wide enough; similarly, Quairading–Cunderdin road apparently supports 220 000 tonnes of grain movements because there is no longer a rail option. Already, we have had the impacts of a rail option and we just want to focus on either of those. The Quairading–Cunderdin road is supporting that, because there is no longer that rail option, so whereas once 90 per cent to 95 per cent was rail transport, we have clearly got a major transfer from rail to road. While this road is rated as a RAV 5, as I understand it—please confirm if that is right or wrong—we have been advised that it is not fit for purpose, due in part to the nature of the S-bend and the road width in certain places. We understand that in that particular instance there is an \$840 000 funding shortfall to fix this road. Is that accurate?

**Mr Felix:** The Quairading–Cunderdin Road is a RAV 5 route. The network going to the bin, however, is mainly a network 4 route, so it is a 27.5-metre truck route. It stops at Junction Road, which is not quite getting into the bin. The road is really an egress onto Great Eastern Highway, which is a RAV 5 route.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** So, just to be clear, there is a gap?

**Mr Felix:** There is.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** What is the cost of that gap? Have you costed up the fix on it?

**Mr Snook:** No, we did not do that because it is a local road.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Got it, but it is now no longer doing local business because 95 per cent of the traffic that travelled on the rail now travels on the road. So, is there a responsiveness within your department, or within Main Roads, to the evolving and rapidly changing situation?

**Mr Snook:** For a start, we have said that it is RAV 4 access into the bin, so anything that drives into the bins is actually going to be a RAV 4 vehicle. It will be a 27.5-metre vehicle; it will not be a 36.5-metre vehicle, so that will happen. If there are problems on the local road network, the individual local governments talk with Main Roads and we can see if we can get additional funding

for them. Because it is a local road, part of the funding that is available is road project grants. Those road project grants go through the regional road group. If the regional road group identifies that as a key link that needs to have work done on it, there is the opportunity for the regional road group to provide the funds to do that work.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** But that goes back to the question I asked. The regional road group is operating now with the same basket of money before the closure of tier 3 as it will operate with after the closure of tier 3, so whilst they might be able to go to the road group, the road group has no more resources to handle the total preservation task or improvements than it had prior to this extra load. That ongoing funding has not increased and, in fact, local government probably would be concerned about the cessation of some programs that were promised in the future for funding.

Can I just move on from that, though, and talk more directly about your role in maintenance and as a manager of the improvement work that is going on in the wheatbelt at the moment? We have heard evidence from various people that quite a bit of the work that was done by Main Roads was not of a good standard or, at least, there was a variability in the standard of the work. Some of the work has already deteriorated very shortly afterwards. Can I ask you: are you satisfied that you have actually put a good product down on the ground and what steps are you taking to ensure that that product is of a high quality?

[9.40 am]

**Mr Snook:** The \$118 million has been delivered over a very short time frame, and to do that Main Roads used a mix of external contractors, its Main Roads integrated services provider—that is like the maintenance contractor from Main Roads—and also some local governments did the work not only on their roads, but on the Main Roads roads as well. Certainly, there have been reports that there have been some problems out there, but we are certainly comfortable with the standard of work that has been done. We had some reports that some claims are being made about the York–Merredin road improvements that have been done between York and Quairading. They were checked yesterday and there are a couple of small potholes that have occurred, but the rest of the road was fine and those small failures will be fixed up.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** So, in terms of some of the work that has been done, are you typically employing what they call “licorice sticks”—the strips of bitumen to widen out the roads?

**Mr Snook:** By that you mean that instead of doing a full-width construction we are widening on the sides? Yes, we are. We are widening on the sides; you are correct.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is that considered to be —

**Mr Snook:** Is it working?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes; is it working, basically? We are hearing that they are breaking up already where some of those sticks have been applied because of the different compaction qualities of the soil and that it would be more appropriate perhaps for the road to be resurfaced completely.

**Mr Snook:** The process of widening on the side of the existing formation—in Main Roads’ talk that means you have got the existing formation, you widen on the side of it and then you put your base course material on the side and compact it—is a process that we call staged construction of the road. That is a process that has been used by Main Roads for many, many years in developing the roads, so it is not a new technique; it is a well-proven technique. That technique has been used over the last two years on what we call the Northam–Cranbrook road—its other name is Great Southern Highway—from Brookton down to Wagin. People have seen that; that looks to be a very good piece of road. That has been widened on the side; it has had a metre-wide bitumen sealing of the shoulders. That looks good and works very well, so if there are some particular cases where it has failed, I guess I would be very interested to know where they are and we could work out what the reason for it is. I do not know, with what you are describing, if particular local failures have occurred over a long length of road or if it is some other situation.

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**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I would be pretty disappointed if it was up to me to tell you what was happening on your road network, so I would hope that you would know better than me as to the condition of these improvements, but that really goes back to the point about the management of some of these contracts and the ground truthing, I suppose, to make sure that the work is actually being done properly. What steps do you do to ensure that as an organisation? Do you just leave it up to the maintenance manager that you have employed or do you have people out there checking?

**Mr Snook:** If it is a contract, we have contract supervisors out there to ensure that the work is done to the correct standard. Also, if it is work that is being done by our maintenance contractor, we have people there as well. So, yes, there is proper supervision that occurs.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Mr Snook, just as a very quick follow-up to that last one before moving on, you mentioned the licorice strip; you called it a staged construction. What is the next stage?

**Mr Snook:** It has gone from the existing formation to a wider formation, but that is a stage —

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** So for the money you have put into that, what kind of lifetime use would you get out of that before that would require resurfacing?

**Mr Snook:** By resurfacing, do you mean bitumen sealing or —

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** How long would you expect those licorice strips to last, fit for purpose, before you would normally be expecting to go back and —

**Mr Snook:** Redo them?

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Yes, or do maintenance to them. I suppose there is always an element of maintenance, but what is the usable life span of it?

**Mr Snook:** You should get 10 to 15 years out of a widening.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Thank you.

Moving on, the committee understands that the Minister for Transport in 2011 did not accept the Narembeen shire's request to remove 36.5-metre road trains from its local roads. The minister cited the resulting increase in local road transport costs, significant hardship for local businesses and farmers, and the loss of connectivity along existing road train routes as a reason for not supporting the shire's application. He said that the effect of this on the local community would not be acceptable to government. The minister acknowledged that there would be a consequence to that decision and promised to provide \$7.678 million to assist the Shire of Narembeen to upgrade and maintain its roads. Can Main Roads update the committee on this situation?

**Mr Snook:** Maybe I will just take this one. That was correct. You have quoted all the reasons that were provided, yes. The piece of what you have said that I am unaware of is the provision of the \$7.68 million. I am not aware of that.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** By virtue of that, is it safe to assume that if you are aware, I can only assume they never got it? I would like to think you are pretty aware of where your millions of dollars are going. I am happy to put it on notice for you.

**Mr Snook:** Yes, could you?

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** Either way, it is a bit of a worry; either they got it and you are not aware they got it. Have there been any other cases where the minister has not allowed a change requested by local government?

**Mr Felix:** There have been a couple of occasions when the decision of not withdrawing certain RAV access has gone up to the minister. The normal process for withdrawals of RAV or downgrading of RAV networks is that we ask local government or the local shires to provide a bit of consultation period with their transport operators and also about whether it is of relevant connectivity to other shires. If it is a major distribution point and it is of value to the network, we

tend to work with local government to make sure that there is some sort of continuity of the network and consistency for the operators. There has been a second occasion when a decision was made not to withdraw the road, and that was sent through a briefing note via the minister for that decision to occur.

**Mr J. NORBERGER:** It seems it is reasonably rare. Are you aware under what authority the minister would normally exercise this right? I assume there is a provision in legislation somewhere that gives the minister the right.

**Mr Snook:** Maybe what you are talking about with RAV access and issuing of permits is a power that is actually delegated to the Commissioner of Main Roads and is then on-delegated down to people within Main Roads. That power is under the Road Traffic Act. In the situation that you have spoken about, when the request came to Main Roads, say from Narembreen, we had concerns about the changes that they were doing. We sought advice from the minister on whether he also had those concerns, and he did. The decision not to make the change rests with Main Roads, because it is within Main Roads' remit to do that.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Just on the decision that was made, the justification put forward sounds very much like what you described as the need for a state road. Perhaps if you were willing to override the wishes of local government and with the arguments that you advance about through traffic and connectivity throughout the network, are they not good arguments to say that that should be an arterial or a main road responsibility, rather than a shire responsibility? I go back to the fact that the shire councils are struggling already to keep these roads up to a standard and that is why their request to reclassify them at a lower level.

[9.50 am]

**Mr Snook:** Part of the reasons for having a road specified as a highway or main road is, in fact, as you said, the connectivity that provides, sort of, economic benefit. It is also to do with the number of vehicles that use that route, if it is a freight route, and a number of criteria. What you are describing, certainly as a through route with connectivity, is one of the criteria, but it is not all the criteria; and, as I said before, I will provide you out of session with all those criteria.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** In this case that we are talking about, with Narembreen, and you have another one—I do not know where that might be—would you entertain a reclassification of that road to a state road?

**Mr Snook:** There are a number of criteria. If those criteria were satisfied, then certainly we could look at it, but I stress there are a whole number of criteria.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** And that advice has been given to Narembreen that that may be an avenue that they should discuss with you, given the fact that you clearly want to keep it, for reasons outside of the interests of the Shire of Narembreen, at a different classification?

**Mr Snook:** From my memory, Narembreen was after all of its 36.5 metre road train routes to be downgraded to 27.5, and doing all of the routes did not give us the picture that there are particular connectivity issues; it was just a blanket proposal.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, but you picked that out, not them, in your response—at least the minister's response has highlighted the inappropriateness of having a section of that long stretch of road that runs through Narembreen being different from the rest of the road. That is not Narembreen's summation of the situation; it is Main Roads'.

**The CHAIR:** I want to ask you for more of an opinion, I suppose, so you do not have to answer if you do not want to. I wonder if you think there is a preference for funding road over rail in Western Australia, because road funding is always broadly matched by the federal government; whereas funding from the commonwealth for rail infrastructure tends to be ad hoc. They do not seem to have a regular program; for example, the current federal government says it wants to build

roads, not railways. That seems to be the message that we are getting here. Do you think that makes a difference to the mindset we come to this thing with? That is, the railways are always the poor cousins that get a bit of money when there is a bit around, but road funding is regular and is part of the regular expenditure of government.

**Mr Snook:** You are right—I cannot answer that.

**The CHAIR:** That is fair enough. Do members have a question?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** No, I have interrogated poor Peter enough.

**The CHAIR:** I would like to thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your correct transcript of evidence. If other questions occur to us, is it okay if we write to you and ask you those questions?

**Mr Snook:** Yes, that will be fine.

**The CHAIR:** I seem to remember, like a quiz show, that you passed on a number of questions. You were going to come back to us about Cardno, the Brookton strategy, Abernethy Road and the mechanism for the review of the status of roads. There may be one or two others, but that would be really appreciated. With that, I thank you very much for being with us here today.

**Mr Snook:** Could I ask one question? To help me to respond, how soon will Hansard provide a copy?

**The CHAIR:** We hope that within a week you will have the Hansard copy, but it is dependent on how busy Hansard is; for example, they were working until nearly half past 11 last night, so that seems to slow them up a bit.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** It is all those wordy politicians that keep them over-employed!

**Hearing concluded at 9.56 am**

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