

Submission to Economics & Industry Standing Committee

Jane Fuchsbichler

This submission is my own personal view and does not reflect opinions of any of the organisations with which I am connected.

As a farmer and living in a rural community, the Management of Western Australia's Freight Rail Network impacts heavily upon the two most important items in anyone's life - health and safety and the economic viability of our business (financial security).

When I first read the Strategic Grain Network Committee Report (2009) my immediate reaction was that it was a "Brookfield" (at the time Westnet) rescue strategy, designed to increase Brookfield profits, whilst passing on costs to growers and Local Government.

I also read the Business Case:

"WA Strategic Grain Network Review – Recommendations on the investment program required for a viable integrated road and rail network supporting the grain industry. Final – 11 June 2010. A submission to the WA Government prepared by Strategic design and Development (Sd+D) on behalf of the Dept. of Transport".

I was appalled at the standard of this document, with its' obvious errors and inaccuracies.

I rang and spoke to someone in the office of the Minister of Transport. I expressed my concern regarding the quality of the report and quoted a couple of obvious mistakes. The reply I received was that this particular person had also noticed these errors, but said not to worry as no one reads these reports.

I responded with the fact that I had read all 72 pages and:

So do you mean you pay someone to write rubbish, that no one reads and then set policy accordingly? The reply was that yes I was on the right track.

The same person also commented that he did not know why the Government did not just admit they had got it wrong and get on and fix it!

Five years later there is overwhelming evidence that rail is the cheapest; quickest; most efficient, safest, most environmentally friendly; most economical path to port for Western Australia's important grain industry. The fact that we are still having the debate reflects badly on those who are elected to represent us.

Our Members of Parliament swear to "faithfully serve the people of Western Australia".

The management of the Rail Line Lease Agreement is undoubtedly serving the best interest of the overseas Shareholders of a foreign corporate, whilst impacting heavily “on the people of Western Australia”, on the economic viability of Western Australian businesses; safety of our roads and communities; maintenance costs of our roads; and downgrading the condition of our railway lines.

Another young man lost his life on our roads last night, near Bruce Rock.

Why is there a blanket of confidentiality which shrouds just about everything to do with the Rail Line Lease Agreement. What is being hidden and why?

The lease agreement has not been tabled in Parliament.

CBH have to sign confidentiality agreements and have even had to go to court to get information.

Brad Thompson West Australian 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014:

*The findings from an investigation into a major derailment on WAs ageing grain freight rail lines will remain secret despite intense public interest in the future of the taxpayer-owned network.*

**Maintenance of the state owned rail infrastructure:**

Why are steel sleepers being used on gravel ballast, when they are not recommended for “pebble” ballast?

The Miling Line Tier 2 had new steel sleepers laid in 2004/05. Steel sleepers should last 40 years, but after less than 10 the Miling Line is in a state of disrepair. Why is there not a check on the standard of maintenance and control over steel sleepers being used, where they are not recommended, as they sink into the ballast?

When restrictions are imposed on rail lines (heat, weight, speed, and splitting trains) these restrictions have to be adhered to without question, but is there any check that these restrictions are reasonable or necessary? Or are they merely a ploy to reduce maintenance costs, whilst yet again increasing costs to the user of the rail.

The monopoly, the confidentiality the total lack of transparency must be questioned. The cost to Western Australia is immense.

I would ask of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee that they ensure that they break the veil of confidentiality and secrecy which surrounds the Rail Line Lease agreement in the public interest. The broader public interest would be served by an open transparent contract with transparency in the way in which it is managed.

The Lease with its’ present lack of protection for Western Australians, whilst promoting profits and dividends for overseas shareholders cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged until 2049.

I ask that Members of Parliament stand by their promise to “faithfully serve the people of Western Australia”.

I would be happy to appear before the committee to present my case.

Jane Fuchsbichler  
Farmer, Bruce Rock.