

GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE

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Our ref: GECZ 270314

Dr Loraine Abernethie, PhD
Principal Research Officer
Economics and Industry Standing Committee
Level 1, 11 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Dr Abernethie

Inquiry into the Management of Western Australia's Freight Rail Network – a Submission to the Economics and Industry Standing Committee from the Great Eastern Country Zone of WALGA

I write on behalf of the Great Eastern Country Zone.

The Great Eastern Country Zone (the Zone) welcomes the Committee's decision to inquire into and report on whether the current lease arrangements and management of the Western Australian freight rail network comprising Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 lines facilitate or hamper state development.

The Zone is one of 12 non-metropolitan Zones that form the State's peak local government body, the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA).

The Zone's membership includes the Shires of:

Bruce Rock;
Cunderdin;
Dowerin;
Kellerberrin;
Kondinin;
Koorda;
Merredin;
Mt Marshall;
Mukinbudin;
Narembeen;
Nungarin;
Tammin;
Trayning;
Westonia;
Wyalkatchem; and
Yilgarn.

The Zone understands that WALGA will be making a submission to the Committee regarding this Inquiry. The Zone is aware of, and supports, WALGA's views on this matter.

As yet the Zone has not had the opportunity to discuss the Inquiry's purpose or whether a submission should be prepared that highlights Zone specific concerns. The Zone's

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Yilgarn

Executive Committee has, however, met and resolved that a copy of the Zone's submission to the Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) on the determination of the floor and ceiling cost price for Brookfield Pty Ltd be sent to you as it believes that its submission to the ERA addresses one of the Inquiry's terms of reference, namely that it investigate the recent strategic directions and policy decisions relating to the current network lease, particularly in relation to the low-traffic lines within the State's rail freight network.

A copy of the Zone's submission to the ERA is attached.

The decision not to prepare a further submission specifically for this Inquiry was also made in part because the result of the ERA's investigations have yet to be made public. As such, and with limited resources, the Zone was uncertain whether it was in a position to add further information.

As stated in its submission to the ERA, local governments across the agricultural region have always been interested in the wellbeing of the agricultural sector - without a viable and sustainable grain industry the viability and sustainability of their communities comes into serious question. An efficient and cost effective transport chain to allow for farm to port delivery of grain is essential for the region's future well-being. The future of the rail freight network across the local governments that make up the Zone is therefore of vital concern to its Member Councils.

Given this importance I have been requested to seek an extension beyond 17 April 2014 to allow both greater input by other interested parties and any further comment that might be considered by the Zone itself.

The Executive Committee in reviewing the Committee's terms of reference for this Inquiry would also urge the Committee to give consideration to the conduct of public hearings across the Wheatbelt and that the hearings be held in conjunction with site inspections. This will provide Committee Members with "hands on" evidence of past policy decisions with respect to the rail freight network and the potential effect of future decisions on the freight network as a whole, that is both the road and rail freight network.

Members of the Great Eastern Country Zone Executive Committee are happy to appear before the Committee should that be considered appropriate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Should you have any questions regarding any of the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Westcott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Helen Westcott
Executive Officer

15 April 2014

Encl: