



MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

JOHN WATKINS MP

NEWS RELEASE

\$21 MILLION FOR GRAIN LINES BEFORE NEXT HARVEST

Tuesday, 19 April 2005

Minister for Transport John Watkins today announced that the Government would spend \$21 million this financial year on maintaining the western NSW restricted rail lines.

Mr Watkins said the funding would improve 716 kilometres of track, to ensure they could carry up to two million tonnes of grain during the 2005-06 harvest.

“We’ll spend an additional \$13 million – on top of the \$8 million already committed this financial year – on maintaining 11 of the 15 restricted lines,” Mr Watkins said.

“This funding boost will secure the grain currently stored along those lines, and make sure the lines are fit to carry next year’s harvest,” he said.

“The work will see us lay down 70,000 new sleepers, and 250 kilometres of new ballast – and focus on the upgrading of 25 rural rail bridges.”

The maintenance program will include repairs to the following ‘R-Lines’:

Line	Sleepers	Kilometres of new ballast	Bridges	
			Replace	Repair
Weemelah – Camurra	35,000	85	2	6
Merrywinebone – Burren	10,000	25	-	-
North Star – Camurra	1,000	40	-	-
Warren – Nevertire	-	-	-	1
Tottenham – Bogan Gate	-	10	4	-
Ungarie – West Wyalong	2,000	10	-	-
Lake Cargelligo – Ungarie	10,000	20	4	-
Naradhan – Ungarie	-	20	2	-
Hillston – Griffith	8,000	20	-	-
Boree Ck – The Rock	2,000	20	3	-
Greenthorpe - Koorawatha	2,000	-	2	1
TOTALS	70,000	250	17	8

Mr Watkins said the State’s Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator (ITSRR) had previously suspended operations on three grain lines (Gwabegar-Binnaway, Rankins Springs-Barmedman, Weemelah-Camurra) for safety reasons.

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"But this funding and maintenance work should enable ITSRR to reopen the Weemelah-Camurra line and lift the suspension on Gwabegar-Binnaway line to allow the existing grain stores to be moved," Mr Watkins said.

Mr Watkins confirmed that the Rankins Springs-Barmedman line would remain suspended and that services on the Burcher-West Wyalong and Willbriggie-Yanco lines would be suspended.

"Economic reforms to the grain industry and rail freight sector have changed the grain supply chain, and the role of rail in that process," he said.

"The decision to suspend services on some R-Lines was made after comparing the cost of transporting the grain from these areas by rail and road and the high cost of maintaining the R-Lines.

"Combined peak tonnages were also taken into account, with 230,000 tonnes from the suspended lines compared to 2 million tonnes from the other locations.

"This extra funding will secure the lines while the Government continues work towards a long-term industry lease arrangement for the restricted lines," Mr Watkins said.

"We'll keep working with the key players until a workable solution is found, which will bring certainty to the rural communities affected."