

Legislative Council

Hansard

Wednesday 25 March 2026

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt...]

Freight Rail for Industry Transportation

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr VINCENT

[2.32 p.m.]

Thank you, Mr President. Minister, my question goes to the current concerns regarding escalating transportation costs in light of the Middle East conflict, particularly the ramifications of remaining fossil fuel dependence. We're confronted by the lack of passenger rail when hearing Tasmanians state that they're choosing not to travel, for example, through the Midland Highway to attend family and other social events in order to avoid the fuel and transport costs. However, my question goes to freight rail.

Is the government currently encouraging heavy industry and truck transportation to transition to freight rail where possible?

What capacity does TasRail have to take on additional freight in light of current fuel shocks?

More broadly, does the current Tasmanian Freight Rail Revitalisation Program include disruption to fossil fuel supply chains as an operational risk and is it addressed by the current resilience planning?

ANSWER

Thank you. Mr President, I will seek some information on that last part of that question. I just want to check on that resilience part, because we're working through a lot of those things at the moment. I might take that part of it on notice, so that I get it spot on for you.

We are talking, literally, daily with all the GBEs and their requirements. Just before the crisis hit, we had quite a few discussions with TasRail about what their next steps were and that's a little bit in conjunction with issues that they are predicting could be an issue in the future with some of their major industrial customers. Just as disruptive as what they're finding now if things didn't go quite perfect. We've been dealing with the issue of the freight travelling north and south. There is a lot of work the CEO is doing with a lot of different freight companies as well as people like Coles and Woolworths that are now starting to bring some of their fresh freight down because the carbon footprints are a lot lower on the rail than it is to trucks running up and down the highway.

The management team at TasRail are very switched on to that and they've been quite successful over the last 12 or 18 months in increasing the number of people using them and the type of freight they're doing it with. Because there haven't been derailments, a lot of people, as I mentioned, Coles and Woolworths and other people with fresh freight, are now starting to use the rail for that sort of thing as well.

They are very conscious of their fuel situation, and it is secure and stable at the moment, but we can't predict too far out of course on that. That's why the discussions are happening a fair bit at the moment. I have been talking with each of my GBEs because most of them are fuel-hungry GBEs and they've been talking amongst themselves as well. As soon as I can find out more information about the resilience plan, I will certainly come back to you as soon as I possibly can. Hopefully, tomorrow just to finalise that a little bit more for you.

Ms Webb - Thank you, I appreciate that.