

Friday 29 October 2009

## **GROWERS SIGNAL CONCERNS OVER GRAIN TRAIN SHORTAGE**

The Brumby Government must conduct an urgent audit of Victoria's rolling stock to ensure this year's grain harvest reaches port, Shadow Minister for Agriculture Peter Walsh said today.

Mr Walsh said grain growers were concerned they would be unable to fully capitalise on the bumper crop expected this season due to a lack of rolling stock.

"There is something wrong when Victoria's grain growers are concerned that Victoria no longer has the rail rolling stock needed to transport a normal harvest," Mr Walsh said.

"Prolonged drought in Victoria has caused rail freight operators to transfer some of Victoria's grain trains interstate and have them converted to standard gauge, meaning they are not readily available to come back to Victoria.

"I have been advised Pacific National will run just four trains this year, instead of the seven to nine trains that transported Victoria's harvest in good seasons.

"Another two trains could be available as a result of the Australian Wheat Board's contract with El Zorro, but this will not be enough to meet requirements.

"With this year's crop shaping up to be one of the best in years, it would be a tragedy for growers if they couldn't capitalise on it because there wasn't enough rolling stock to get grain to port for export."

Mr Walsh said the Brumby Government needed to sit down immediately with rail freight operators to ensure Victoria had enough trains to cope with the harvest.

"If there aren't enough train sets to move this year's harvest, growers will face delays and extra costs in getting the grain to port," Mr Walsh said.

"The harvest will need to be transported by road, adding extra strain to freight routes which are already in poor condition.

"Victoria's incompetent Transport Minister Lynne Kosky claims she expects most of this year's harvest to be transported by rail, yet has not assured growers that the rail freight system has the capacity to transport the harvest.

"With the harvest starting only weeks away, the Brumby Government is running out of time to ensure there are enough trains available," Mr Walsh said.

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