



# Farmers warn of rebellion

## Brad Thompson

One of the last trains to run on rail lines in the heart of Wheatbelt carted thousands of tonnes of grain into Merredin yesterday as farmers warned the State Government it faced a huge backlash over its failure to save the ageing track.

Trains and wagons will be cleared from the 509km of track known as Tier 3 at the weekend, with the closure unleashing what some farmers have described as “trucking hell” on country roads.

There are about 875,000 tonnes of grain from last season’s record harvest in receival bins on the rail network and Co-operative Bulk Handling estimates moving it will result in about 30,000 extra truck movements.

WAFarmers has appealed to its members to drive trucks into the city on Tuesday in protest and the Quairading branch of the Liberal Party is considering disbanding over the rail closure.

Wheatbelt Rail Retention Alliance president Greg Richards said communities felt betrayed by Premier Colin Barnett, who pledged to keep viable Tier 3 lines open before last year’s State election.

Mr Richards said the Government should intervene in a bitter row between Brookfield Rail, which has a 49-year lease over the State-owned lines, and CBH to keep the lines open.

The access agreement between two companies on all grain freight lines expires on Monday. They confirmed yes-

terday that an eleventh-hour interim deal would keep grain on Tier 1 and Tier 2 lines until the end of October.

In another twist yesterday, the Economic Regulation Authority appointed an arbitrator to decide if there is capacity for the Tier 3 lines to continue operating.

Mr Barnett refused to comment.



## Weekend West

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**Final clickety-clack: Off One of the last trains to use the Tier 3 track.** Picture: Mogens Johansen