



Speech by

**Mr G. HEALY**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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Hansard 6 August 1998

#### **QUEENSLAND RAIL**

**Mr HEALY** (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): I will give credit in this place where credit is due. I want to thank the Minister for Transport for his promptness yesterday in addressing an issue in my electorate which stemmed from a classic piece of outdated bureaucratic rubbish. It is to do with a submission that I received yesterday morning from a Toowoomba mother, which received prominent coverage in yesterday's edition of the Toowoomba Chronicle.

The lady in question booked a return rail fare to Mount Isa with Queensland Rail for herself and her six-year-old son and proceeded to arrange sleeping berths for the two overnight stays each way on the train. She was shocked to be told by Queensland Rail staff that, because her son was six years old, he could not sleep in the same berth as her and "he will have to share a berth with two other gentlemen in the male quarters" and that she would have to sleep in the female quarters. The lady promptly cancelled the sleeping berth without any hesitation, opting to sit for the entire journey with her son safely beside her. In her submission to me, the lady wrote—

"Being a parent, I find this policy appalling, antiquated and totally disgusting in an age where children are not safe anywhere. I have spent my entire son's life teaching him not to talk to strangers and Queensland Rail expects me to allow my son to sleep in a room with total strangers—not only strangers to him but also total strangers to me."

I agree with her and I assure honourable members that the Minister did, too. This was an appalling regulation. As I understand, this regulation was on page 4 of the passenger fares book for reservation of seats and berths on Traveltrain services.

I gave the lady an undertaking that I would raise the issue with the Minister today. However, the Minister advised the Toowoomba Chronicle last night that he had already sought an urgent review of the policy and he sought to have it amended yesterday, which I understand has been done. In cases such as this, commonsense should prevail. On behalf of the lady in question, I thank the Minister. It is hoped that in future issues such as this can be cleared up as quickly as possible without too much fuss and politicking.

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