



Speech by

**Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER**

**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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Hansard 26 October 1999

**CENSURE OF MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY**

**Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER** (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (6.50 p.m.): The Chief Executive of Queensland Rail, Vince O'Rourke, is an honourable man who has given good service to Queensland Rail and the State of Queensland for almost nine years under Governments of both persuasions. In my view, his current salary level, which it has been revealed today in the Parliament is around \$300,000, is relatively modest by industry standards. However, there can be no denying that the people of Queensland would see a single increase in his salary from \$225,500 to \$300,000, which occurred last year during the term of the coalition Government, as excessive and not in conformity with what would be regarded as the community standard, particularly given issues related to remuneration for workers of QR and other places. Today the member for Gregory implied that I was in some way responsible for approving the most recent salary increase. The member asked whether there had been subsequent salary increases to the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail since that increase of \$74,500. Because of his interjections I did not get the opportunity to answer the question. The answer is—

**Mr Johnson:** You can't answer it.

**Mr BREDHAUER:** Because of the member's interjections, I did not get a chance to answer the question. If he ceases to interject now, I will answer it. The answer is that he has not had a pay increase since then. The reason is that he has declined to accept a number of pay increases recommended by the board. I repeat: the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail has declined to accept a number of pay increases that have been recommended by the board for his wages. There are two of which I am aware, one in fairly recent times. The suggestion by the honourable member that I was in some way responsible for approving that significant pay increase is wrong.

I table in the Parliament a copy of the letter from the former chairman of QR, Nev Blunt, dated 15 April to Vince O'Rourke advising that an agreement had been reached by the board to establish a new service contract. The date of that letter is 15 April 1998. I table also—and I referred to this letter this morning—a letter to the former shareholding Ministers, the members for Caloundra and Gregory, dated 27 April 1998. It advises the shareholding Ministers of the intended increase. At no stage this morning did I suggest that the Minister signed off. I did not. What I said was that he had the letter—and he admits that he received the letter—and he failed to do anything about notifying the QR board of his concern about the quantum of that increase. That is undeniable; there is no record. He suggested that it lay on the table waiting for me. There was nothing on my desk when I came into my ministerial office—not even a paperclip let alone a letter from the board of Queensland Rail.

Let me table an extract of the contract of the Chief Executive of Queensland Rail signed on 15 April 1998 to take effect from 21 April 1998, when the member for Gregory was the Minister. To suggest that I was responsible for approving that pay increase is a deliberate deception. He knows that is wrong. The issue that the Minister for Mines and Energy was dealing with was the abject lack of process and accountability in the former coalition Government. When the former Ministers wrote to the chair of the Port of Brisbane Authority in 1997, the members for Gregory and Caloundra stated—

"This letter is to confirm that we see this issue as primarily a matter for determination by your Board."

Like Pontius Pilate, the pair of them washed their hands of any responsibility. There was no process. Do honourable members know how I know there was no process? That is because one of the pay increases given to the Chief Executive of the Ports Corporation of Queensland was approved by the

board on 25 May last year, which was when the Opposition was in caretaker mode. For the board to think that it could approve a pay increase of that proportion when the Government was in caretaker mode and there were no Ministers responsible for the board shows the abject lack of process. The Minister for Mines and Energy, the Premier and the Government have made a determination to do something about this. Under the former shareholding Ministers, the member for Gregory and the member for Caloundra, the then Treasurer, it was Rafferty's rules. We are about putting in place proper processes of accountability.

Time expired.

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