



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 10 March 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Redbank Railway Workshops

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to announce yet another jobs initiative by this can-do Government that will enhance employment security for Queensland Rail employees at the Redbank workshops and that will create opportunities for further employment in the Ipswich region.

Queensland Rail's Redbank workshops have won an important \$40m contract for the construction of 400 new container wagons and the upgrade of a further 319 Queensland Rail freight cars. This contract will guarantee the continuity of 30 workshop jobs at Redbank. The security of the 30 jobs under this contract comes on the heels of my 16 September 1998 announcement of contract work at Redbank to complete a seven year program of re-engineering and overhaul of 88 suburban Citytrain electric train sets, securing some 50 jobs at Redbank.

In addition, Queensland Rail has already announced a doubling of its general intake of apprentices for 1999 to 150. Presently there are 53 apprentices and eight trainees at Redbank, of whom 12 apprentices and eight trainees have started since January this year, and Queensland Rail will be looking to increase this further by the middle of the year. This is good news for job creation and economic growth in the Ipswich region. As well as providing job opportunities, work and investment will flow from contracts to the local community. This is a real bonus for jobs in the area.

With this contract, Queensland Rail will upgrade the container wagon fleet with the modification of existing wagons commencing in July 1999 and the construction of the new wagons starting in September this year, to be completed by March 2000 and December 2000 respectively. When completed, the wagons will achieve greater efficiencies by increasing carrying capacity by 15 to 17 tonnes and the speed limits of some wagons from 80 km/h to 100 km/h. This will translate into an ability to carry larger containers and reduce shunting time at container terminals.

Redbank currently employs some 860 staff at the site, with a total turnover exceeding \$100m per annum. This represents a significant growth in turnover from just \$40m in 1996. Following the \$35m upgrade, the Redbank workshops now have the capacity and ability to win more contracts, and this demonstrates why it is now acknowledged as the biggest, most modern and productive wagon manufacturing facility in Australia. Further investment planned within the next two years will give Redbank state-of-the-art capacity for the maintenance, manufacture and repair of all rolling stock and associated components.

Job security and the creation of new job opportunities in regional Queensland remains a key to the Government's employment initiatives, as has been our commitment to increasing apprenticeships and trainee positions. In the first six months of Government, approximately 582 fixed-term employees in Queensland Rail, including 72 at the Townsville workshops, have been converted to permanent employment. In addition, there has been an in-principle agreement between Queensland Rail management and the rail unions that will mean permanent jobs for another 150 fixed-term workers. Under this agreement, Queensland Rail has undertaken to limit the use of fixed-term employees to legitimate temporary situations and only when permanent employment does not meet their business needs.

Under the last Government, approximately 1,300 Queensland Rail positions had been allowed to become fixed-term positions. This was more than necessary and contributed to a climate of job insecurity. Initiatives of this Government will see over 700—

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misleading the House on the issue of fixed-term employment, and I ask him to retract that statement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr JOHNSON: There is a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have just ruled that there is no point of order. The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr BREDHAUER: Initiatives of this Government will see over 700 fixed-term employees at Queensland Rail given permanent jobs. The Beattie Government has delivered on job security to Queensland Rail workers.
