



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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### QUEENSLAND RAIL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.09 p.m.): Just like with the shemozzle in the electricity industry, the Beattie government has also lied to Queenslanders about what it had planned for job losses in the railways. Now we find out that more rail jobs are to be lost so that Queensland Rail can repay \$400 million promised for new rolling stock in Brisbane in the run-up to the last election.

The National Party opposition obtained a government document during the estimates which clearly states that Queensland Rail has to hand back funding from the implementation of rail reforms. It says that the increase in the cost of train service contracts as a result of the investment in additional trains is to be funded from 'the implementation of reforms identified as part of the Queensland Rail strategic assessment'. Now the minister is claiming that the equity injection does not have to be repaid, but perhaps he should explain who was telling the truth with regard to this document. This document, which was tabled during the estimates, clearly says that it includes a return of equity.

This issue is about what this government knew before the election and what it is telling people now, and the fact that there are more jobs to go. The announcement of the loss of 700 rail jobs, mostly in regional Queensland, is the first instalment that Queensland Rail workers are going to have to pay. The \$400 million loan that QR has to repay was announced by the Premier as part of his Smart State Building Fund on the eve of the last election, but he did not tell people about the jobs that would be lost as part of this rail strategic assessment. This document clearly links those two issues together. Queenslanders have been misled by this government. Rail workers have been betrayed by this government. Regional Queensland has been let down because every job that goes from these regional centres has an impact not only upon those families directly, who lose the breadwinner in the family, but upon the wider economy as those jobs are permanently stripped away from that local network of jobs.

Mr Beattie knew that this promise was to be paid for by QR jobs, just as he knew about the shambles the power industry was in, but he deliberately withheld it from Queenslanders. He hid it from those who are now losing their jobs and those thousands of rail workers who will lose their jobs in the near future because this government has not clearly outlined the full extent of how many more jobs are to go. It is sheer hypocrisy for him to try to blame the introduction of competition to the Queensland Rail network, as Queensland Rail had gleefully welcomed the opportunity for QR to compete interstate.

On 2 May this year the group general manager for Queensland Rail issued a media release announcing it had launched a container service to Melbourne. He bragged that 'our new service will enable us to compete in the market and be a part of the predicted increase in the general freight traffic' and 'it will form a link from Cairns through Queensland to Melbourne'.

What we have seen from the government has been deceit over the electricity industry before the election when it said that everything was fine and to 'trust us'. Then immediately after the election the government launched the review and, surprise surprise, what the people have been saying was true: there was a shemozzle and a real breakdown of maintenance in that system. It also lied in regard to rail jobs, the state of the rail industry and the jobs that would be lost from these communities in order to pay for the upgrade within Brisbane. This document proves it. Let the minister explain why this document clearly says

'a return of equity'. This issue is really about jobs in the regions and how many more are to go, the fact that rail workers are being used as an excuse, and that competition—which was signed off by the ALP in 1995—is being used as an excuse to strip away more jobs from Queensland Rail. No wonder it does not trust this government.