



Speech by

Hon. Nita Cunningham

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard Wednesday, 24 November 2004

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. N.I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg—ALP) (4.14 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill 2004. I congratulate the minister on acting so quickly to bring this legislation before the parliament. It is legislation that will ensure that the investigation into the recent diesel tilt train derailment near Bundaberg, and any future investigations of rail safety incidents, can occur completely and thoroughly to identify the causes and contributing factors to an incident. These amendments, among other things, will also provide the appropriate level of protection for witnesses from civil, criminal and administrative proceedings.

Residents in my electorate of Bundaberg were stunned by the recent diesel tilt train derailment so close to home. The electric tilt train that runs daily between Bundaberg and Brisbane is heavily supported by our residents and by me. This service is extremely good and extremely popular with our community, and its heavy usage by our residents made the recent accident just outside of Bundaberg even more shattering.

While referring to this accident, I would like to place on record in this House, without naming anyone in particular, my congratulations for the wonderful work of our police and emergency services men and women who handled the disaster in an exemplary manner. Our hospitals, with 140 staff on duty, proved beyond a doubt their efficiency, professionalism and ability to provide top-quality health services under enormous pressure. The staff of Queensland Rail did a magnificent job in clearing the site, identifying and returning luggage and personal belongings to the passengers, and arranging alternative transport.

Almost 100 police, ambulance fire, SES and Queensland Rail vehicles and 400 staff members, three rescue helicopters and a fleet of local buses were utilised, and all 163 passengers and the train crew were transferred to hospitals in Bundaberg, Gladstone and Hervey Bay or to the Bundaberg station for transfer. As is always the case in times of disaster, the Salvation Army members were on site quietly going about their valuable role of administering to those in need.

It was a terrible accident, but the injured passengers I spoke to were in high spirits, very grateful for the help that had been given and full of praise for our Bundaberg Base Hospital. The strength of the carriages clearly saved lives. There is no doubt that serious injuries were kept to a minimum because of the speed and quality of the help provided. It was a magnificent effort, and we are all very proud of Bundaberg's superb response to such a major disaster that occurred almost 40 minutes driving time away from the city in the middle of a dark night.

I thank the Premier, who came to Bundaberg twice, and the ministers for Transport, Health and Emergency Services who travelled to Bundaberg within hours to support the workers and the injured passengers. I thank everyone who played a part in what was the most coordinated response I have ever witnessed.

We hope there will never be another rail smash like this one, but if there is then we will have this legislation in place to allow appropriate investigative processes to proceed. The amendments to this bill will require the government to table in parliament a report offering full transparency on the findings of an investigation within 14 days of it being received. This amendment will apply to the report that will be

prepared at the conclusion of the current diesel tilt train derailment investigation. I hope this report will be completed without delay for the benefit of Queensland Rail staff and for the confidence of our passengers. Again, I congratulate the minister on his quick action in bringing this legislation before us, and I commend the bill to the House.