



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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SALE OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (12.14 pm): Transport minister Rachel Nolan's handling of the upcoming sale of Queensland Rail is a train wreck in slow motion. Minister Nolan clearly told this parliament on 21 May—

Queensland Rail is not for sale.

But today, in defending her backflip and what the Premier had said, she indeed confirmed that key parts of Queensland Rail are about to be flogged off.

In light of the minister's backflip, Queenslanders have a right to know whether the minister has misled parliament, or whether the minister had any idea what was going on in her portfolio. There are only two choices. In an extraordinary admission of her irrelevance, the minister claimed the former defence, that she did not know about her boss's decision—Premier Bligh's plan—to flog off key parts of the Transport portfolio, key parts of Queensland Rail, until the decision was a fait accompli.

How on earth can the workers in Queensland Rail or those who understand the fundamental importance of logistics in Queensland—the need not just for short- and medium-term but long-term investment—have any confidence that this minister knows what she is doing? How can they have any confidence that this government, in a panic, desperate to plug its bottom line because of mismanagement, is really going to make choices in the best long-term as well as short-term interests of Queensland? It is a really extraordinary situation for a transport minister to come in here and tell this House that she was not going to allow Queensland Rail to be flogged off and then we see the Premier marching down that track.

The 'Bleeding Queensland Plan'—what Premier Bligh calls her Renewing Queensland Plan—will see the sell-off of key assets: Queensland Motorways Ltd, the port of Brisbane, Forestry Plantations Queensland, Queensland Rail's above and below rail coal business and the Abbot Point Coal Terminal. It seems to me that if a transport minister does not know that that is being scoped up and prepared for sale then she does not deserve to be holding that position.

Options for the sale of Queensland Rail's bulk freight, intermodal, retail and regional freight services will also be investigated and offered, according to the Premier,

in the most appropriate way. I wonder if she is going to consult with her transport minister about that. Certainly, Queenslanders were not consulted about the sale, so I guess the transport minister has that in common with the people of Queensland.

Queenslanders were not consulted about this government's intention to give Queenslanders a fuel tax. Let us scrap any of this rubbish of saying that it is a subsidy. It is a fuel tax. What has operated over the past number of years has been a fuel tax rebate so that Queensland could maintain some critical edge as a low-tax state still delivering and growing.

For 150 years, Queensland has had a proud history of building up the appropriate assets of state to be available for the people of Queensland to do business and support the budget bottom line. It is a tragedy that, after 150 years, we see this state government, under a socialist Labor Premier, taking us back to the starting point where Queensland was so badly in debt.

The asset sales that have been talked about are being proposed in a way which is ill considered. Not even the transport minister has been consulted. Certainly it does not bode well for the hundreds and hundreds of workers at many sites throughout Queensland. How can they have any assurance that their interests not just in the short term but also in the long term are going to be taken into account by this government? They cannot, because the transport minister has already backflipped and said that she fully supports what her Premier is doing, even though, allegedly, the Premier did not have the courtesy or the basic professionalism to consult with the transport minister.

We need strength of leadership and a team of competent people. We currently do not see that from this government. The incompetence of this government in losing our AAA rating before anybody else is a sign that it is in a panic and is looking for any measure and any spin to justify the disgraceful way that it is handling this budget.