



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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QUEENSLAND RAIL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (11.53 am): The Bligh state government has announced a sell-off of the coal component of Queensland Rail and the Abbot Point Coal Terminal, bulk, and also to target Queensland Rail's bulk retail and regional freight, which includes the Townsville-Mount Isa line. This sell-off is one of the greatest acts of betrayal by the Labor Party in Queensland's history.

I had the privilege to work for Queensland Rail for 20 years. When I joined, a job in the railway was a job for life. We had a rail network that had a station at each town, a trucking yard every 30 kilometres, a freight service that reduced the traffic on our roads, small communities that thrived on the back of the railways and which relied on a reliable freight service, and a Queensland Rail that would boast up to 26,000 employees. Many workers were Aboriginals, South Sea Islanders and Torres Strait Islanders. That was Queensland Rail before 19 years of Labor government under Goss, Beattie and now the public assets seller, Anna Bligh.

We never thought of seeing the day when a 144-year-old Queensland icon, built by the taxpayers of Queensland through their sweat and toil, would be sold. I have spoken with rail employees who fear for their jobs. They are dismayed and say they cannot believe that Labor has betrayed their core principles and grassroots. Our Citytrain and passenger services run at a loss of \$1 billion each year and rely on the coal network to prop them up. Who is going to pay for that when these profitable networks are gone?

These fire sales have nothing to do with the economic crisis. The \$75 million debt was racked up by Labor during the good years of the mining and housing boom and strong economic growth. The Bligh government promised 100,000 jobs during the election campaign and all we have is job losses, asset sales and a state that has lost its credit rating.

The sale of Queensland's assets will mean the state will have no income stream for future generations and no income coming in for our hospitals, our roads and our schools. That shows gross government mismanagement of a magnitude not seen before. I encourage government backbenchers to not support this sell-off and stick to their core principles.