



Speech by


Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 23 March 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Natural Disasters, Rail Infrastructure

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (10.24 am): Last week I visited Spring Bluff and saw firsthand the amount of damage throughout the Toowoomba Range area. The western railway system, which is vital for freight and passenger customers, was hit hard during the floods and damage to the line is extensive. Repair works of this scale would usually take at least six months to complete. However, crews have been working around the clock to reopen the line as soon as possible. The expected date for reopening the western rail line has been brought forward twice and it is now expected to be fully operational by 28 March.

It was unbelievable to see the destruction endured in the Toowoomba area. The historical King's Bridge, a 140-year-old heritage listed structure, was completely knocked down. Work has already started to rebuild the bridge, bigger and better. I am told that repairing such a bridge would usually take anywhere from 18 months to two years to complete, but this bridge will be finished by the end of this month. The historical Spring Bluff Railway Station was another sight, with wash-outs and landslips underneath the rail line of about a 25-metre drop. The amount of work needed to restore the line is massive. We have had around 150 Queensland Rail employees working onsite to rebuild tracks and structures.

Each week about 100 trains carrying nearly 200,000 tonnes of freight travel from South-West Queensland over the Toowoomba Range to primary industry processors, the Port of Brisbane and other markets. The reopening of the western and south-western lines will reconnect vital trains carrying coal, grain, livestock and general freight to and from towns all the way out to Quilpie and Dirranbandi. The Westlander passenger service, which travels from Brisbane to Charleville, will recommence services in mid-April.

Queensland Rail crews and local contractors have put in an extraordinary effort to work as quickly and safely as possible, which will see the reopening date brought forward once again. I thank all Queensland Rail staff who have worked so hard repairing the damage and getting our vital freight and transport infrastructure back up and running.