




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2012

MOTION: QUEENSLAND RAIL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (6.13 pm): Many in the House will remember that in 2009 we sat here in shock and disbelief as the previous Treasurer tabled the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Bill, which included the sale of Queensland Rail's above and below rail coal businesses and assets, along with the Ports Corporation of Queensland's Abbot Point Coal Terminal and Forestry Plantations Queensland. The reasoning of the former Labor government was very similar to what we are hearing day after day after day here in the House: 'We have to make the hard decisions,' and 'The people of Queensland will thank us for it and understand.'

But the main thing that brought rage was the breaking up of Queensland Rail—a 144-year old Queensland icon built by the taxpayers of Queensland through their sweat and toil. It was a wonderful transport service and asset and Queensland Rail boasted of having up to 26,000 employees. Many workers were Aboriginals, South Sea Islanders or Torres Strait Islanders. It carried billions of tonnes of commodities year in, year out, reducing traffic on the roads and providing safer roads and less road maintenance.

During the asset sale debate, many LNP members lined up and slammed the Labor government for its short-sightedness and lack of long-term vision. The member for Surfers Paradise said at the time in *Hansard*—

The Premier is selling off assets because she has no long-term strategy to address the important challenges Queensland is facing.

This current Treasurer, Mr Tim Nicholls, said at the time that asset sales were 'ripping the heart out of Queensland communities'. He said—

Critically, asset sales should not be undertaken simply for the sake of a few extra dollars and they should not be seen as a short-term fix for long-term problems.

The member for Southern Downs said—

The thing that is not being considered by honourable members opposite is that the maintenance of some government assets guarantees a revenue source. If those opposite cut off our most lucrative revenue sources and sell them at the bottom of the market, what are the other implications for the budget?

The member for Mirani voiced his concerns for the fettlers and drivers and all the Queensland Rail jobs in Sarina. How many Queensland Rail jobs have been lost in his electorate and many other rural electorates? The member for Gregory best voiced the feelings of those who knew what the real value of retaining the Queensland Rail freight arm was. He said—

Those things have been wealth generators for this state for the last 100-odd years, yet now we see this government with a vision to dispose of the arteries feeding the heart. If you shut the arteries down the rest will die, and I do not say that lightly.

The member for Bundaberg said that the sale of Queensland Rail was 'selling the family home to pay the bills' and 'selling the goose that lays the golden egg'. The member for Hervey Bay said—

With the sale of the Port of Brisbane and the Abbot Point Coal Terminal to overseas investors, they will control our mines, our rail and our ports. What will be left for Queenslanders? We are selling Queensland's ports and selling our workers to overseas investors.

That is all this motion says—do not sell Queensland Rail—but the LNP are opposing this motion. That means they want to sell the rest of Queensland Rail. The Premier came to Charters Towers, and I said that the Premier is going to sell Queensland Rail. He said that the member for Dalrymple is misleading the people and that he has no plans to sell Queensland Rail. That is what this motion is about—to guarantee to the people of Queensland that the government will not sell their assets. The people do not want our assets sold. Telstra was sold and now we cannot get mobile phone coverage in rural and regional Queensland as we were promised when it was sold. The retail arm of our energy sector was sold—and the LNP backed this and could not race to their pens fast enough to sign it—and now the cost of electricity has increased 300 per cent. The State Government Insurance Office was sold, and now we are seeing the consequence of that with insurance rip-offs and rorts. The sale of our coal component sees a billion dollars less going back to our Treasury coffers. If the government supports the sale of Queensland Rail, we will see billions of dollars that could have been going to hospitals, education, nurses, the fires, et cetera, going to profit-making corporations.

It is very important that we keep the assets. In relation to Queensland Rail assets, the state government still owns 7,200 kilometres of track—the south-east to west corridor, the central western corridor, the Normanton line, the Forsyth line, the great northern rail corridor, Citytrain, passenger services, Spirit of the Outback, The Inlander, The Sunlander and passenger express services. These are assets that are very important to retain in the state government's hands. We must retain these assets. This is about stopping the sale of Queensland Rail—

(Time expired)