




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

---

### QUEENSLAND RAIL TRANSIT AUTHORITY BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (12.42 pm): I rise in support of the Queensland Rail Transit Authority Bill 2013. The Newman government is taking steps to continue the reform program already underway in Queensland Rail to build a better rail business. The community is becoming increasingly aware of the taxpayer funded investment being made in rail in Queensland and understandably expectations are growing in the areas of improving service quality—improved reliability, increased frequency and simplification of the timetables and scheduling; maintaining fare affordability; and improving service experience—real-time information, enhanced comfort, cleaner trains and stations and enhanced safety and security.

Current fiscal challenges whereby budget funds are limited, combined with the requirement to substantially increase capital investment in new transport infrastructure, is very self-evident, meaning the Newman government must explore new ways to deliver enhanced customer service levels, look for new innovations and provide greater cost efficiency. This includes reviewing the capability within the current Queensland Rail organisational structure to drive cost reduction initiatives through improved productivity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Those Labor members opposite may be saying that change is not required. They try to convince people that everything is tickety-boo over there in Queensland Rail. Clearly this is not the case. But there is no sense trying to convince us if they cannot even convince members of their own party. One person, for example, who is not convinced is the Labor Party councillor for Wynnum Manly, Peter Cumming. Councillor Cumming is a pretty switched on chap so they should listen to what he has to say. For example, he wrote to Labor Party members in late 2011 saying—

I am a realist and expect Labor to lose this state election.

He was right. In fact, looking across the chamber right now he was very right. Back on 6 November 2012 Councillor Cumming also wrote to me, in my capacity as the Assistant Minister for Public Transport, about a Queensland Rail matter. This is what he stated—

It confirms my view what an utterly useless organisation Queensland Rail is and the fact that it has been getting worse over the years.

That is from the Labor councillor from Wynnum Manly. Let me repeat the last bit: 'getting worse over the years'. Here was an elected member of the Australian Labor Party who was voicing the utter frustration of thousands of rail passengers who are fed up with the performance of the Labor state government and the then minister for transport and now Leader of the Opposition. For years they suffered as trains continually ran late or were cancelled. For the best part of 20 years those opposite—in fact, one member opposite—and their former failed comrades were responsible for running Queensland Rail.

Let me clearly state that I do not believe these views were a reflection on the staff of Queensland Rail. An organisational culture and performance is only as good as those at the top. In my career I have worked in both the private and public sector. It has been my experience that some of

the finest employees I have had the privilege of working with have come from the public sector. If they are given the scope and flexibility to shine they are capable of fantastic things.

As an example, several years ago I had the honour to lead a team from local government that won the Australian customer service national award, beating the best service providers from around the country from the private sector.

**Mr Dowling:** Go Redlands.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** Indeed, Redland shire council. Customer service is dependent upon attitude, not whether one works for an ASX 200 private enterprise company. It is about the right corporate culture regardless of size or sector. Money and resources cannot buy a winning corporate attitude. It is a permanent state of mind to put the customer first. There is the famous customer service mantra I would always use with my own staff—'If you are not serving a customer you are serving someone that is.'

I have spoken to a lot of Queensland Rail staff since becoming the Assistant Minister for Public Transport. I have to say that the vast majority of them are as committed to providing quality rail services for Queenslanders as the Newman government. These staff members, the travelling public, the councillor for Wynnum Manly and Queensland Rail as a whole have been let down previously by a distinct lack of leadership.

That lack of leadership started right at the top. We only need to look as far as the opposition benches to the Leader of the Opposition. As I continually state in this hallowed chamber, how can those opposite formerly run a large organisation like Queensland Rail when they lack cutting-edge business experience in the real world? I am pleased to say that things have changed considerably since March 2012. We now have a minister who is focused on improving the affordability, reliability and frequency of public transport. Minister Emerson is determined to get Queensland Rail back on track in every sense of the term.

Additionally, we have the Queensland Rail board, led by the chairman, Mr Glen Dawe, which has turned Queensland Rail back into a railway operation that is focused on delivering better rail services for all Queenslanders. If people want to see the power of proper leadership they do not have to look any further than Queensland Rail. Like any organisation undergoing cultural change, there will be teething problems. But there is a steely determination to turn the performance of Queensland Rail around. This bill will facilitate that task.

We now have a workforce that is focused on getting the train network running on time. The result is that we have now turned record low rail reliability in the dying days of the previous Labor government into results that many rail providers around the world could only dream of. Don't get me wrong: we still have instances of trains running late, but what impresses me is that there is an organisational desire to do better and look for continuous improvement. That is why this bill is so important. It gives Queensland Rail as an organisation the tools it needs to make things better on its journey towards continuous improvement. It removes the distractions that come from being a government owned corporation, leaving it to focus on improving services for Queenslanders. Some of the significant benefits we will see because of this change include improved operation and management of rail services, more efficient delivery of rail services and, importantly, enhanced customer service for rail passengers.

With Queensland Rail currently receiving around 80 per cent of its funding directly from the government, it needs to be more directly accountable to government to improve operations and bring costs under control. It is important to note that the bill includes transitional provisions to ensure that the rail business is able to continue to operate and service the community and industry on commencement. This includes provision for transferring the board, chief executive and senior executive. The team has implemented a number of changes to improve the performance of Queensland Rail over the past 12 months, and this will allow these important actions to continue.

I mentioned previously that we have many great people working in Queensland Rail, so it is very important for us to ensure that the remuneration and leave entitlements et cetera are not impacted by this change. I am convinced that this bill does this. This government is totally committed in its belief about Queensland being a great state with great opportunities. This goes beyond creating opportunities for our kids or the opportunity for business to flourish. This change means that Queensland Rail will have the opportunity to deliver better rail services for all Queenslanders. I commend the Queensland Rail Transit Authority Bill to the House.