




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 1 November 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queensland Rail

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (9.46 am): There are a number of issues concerning Queensland Rail and projects within the Department of Transport and Main Roads that I wish to address in the House this morning. I start by placing on record my thanks and acknowledgement for the hardworking train crew, our drivers and guards for their delivery of service over the past week. I am outraged on behalf of all of our public transport—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Glass House, you are warned under standing order 253A for your interjections. If you persist, I will take the appropriate action.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: On behalf of all of our public transport users I am outraged at the treatment they have received from Queensland Rail in recent weeks. Customers rightfully expect the highest level of service delivery on our rail network. They have not been receiving this from Queensland Rail. The lack of notice, the changes to timetables and now the increasingly apparent position that senior personnel within the organisation knew of these risks are beyond acceptable.

Queensland Rail has achieved solid on-time running results for many years, up to and including September this year, of above 95 per cent. Today we are running more train services than we were in September and we are running them with solid on-time results—this morning's a.m. peak ran at 95 per cent. Even on the interim timetable, on Monday to Thursday we are running 4.76 per cent more services than in September and on Fridays we are running 5.3 per cent more services than in September, but we have reached this place after the worst possible journey.

It is evident that the timetable released into service on 4 October was not able to be delivered by Queensland Rail with the resources available. The former CEO described that timetable as 'ambitious'. The Premier has established an investigation led by Phillip Strachan into just how an organisation of this size and capacity—an organisation like Queensland Rail—could allow such an error to occur. As the opposition have said, this issue did not happen overnight. The seeds of this problem were sown during periods of mass retrenchment under the previous government. This is highly disappointing. Over the course of the previous government there was a reduction of 1,773 full-time-equivalent workers at Queensland Rail. Critically, there was a reduction of 66 members of the driver training unit, including drivers.

This does not excuse the failure of Queensland Rail to foresee the impact and address these cuts in delivering a new timetable, but it does go some way to explain the impact and tightness of the train crew team. Last year the government lifted the recruitment freeze and opened up positions to train

100 new drivers and 100 new guards. Of those positions, Queensland Rail has recruited 74 new guards and 79 new drivers. Currently, 12 guards and 33 drivers are being trained. The guards and drivers who have been recruited but are not currently in training are booked into upcoming schools. There is clearly a capacity constraint and means of fast-tracking are being considered now. Some of the schools are due to be completed as early as this month. I am advised that 66 members of the driver training unit, including drivers, as I said, were made redundant from July 2012 to December 2014. I am advised that under the Palaszczuk government we have recruited an additional nine trainers.

On 24 October 2016 I announced that an additional 100 driver and 100 guard placements would be opened up. They are currently open for internal applications through to 7 November. Following that process, Queensland Rail will assess capacity and ability of external applicants. In regard to the practice of Queensland Rail seeking internal applicants before external recruitment, I note that this practice was strengthened in the enterprise bargaining agreement struck in 2013 under the then minister and now shadow Treasurer. It has been a longstanding practice.

In regard to the opening of the Redcliffe peninsula line, until Thursday, 20 October I was informed that Queensland Rail was able to deliver the timetable as proposed. On 21 September, in a brief to shareholder ministers Queensland Rail stated that the 4 October—

... timetable undertook internal review through a Quality Assurance process to ensure the timetable was fit-for-purpose and mitigated impact to freight and Traveltrain services.

I table the document.

Tabled paper: Queensland Rail Briefing Note, endorsed 21 September 2016, for the Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games, Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe, titled 'Redcliffe Peninsula line update—new timetable' [\[1939\]](#).

On the evening of Friday, 30 September there was a large number of unexpected cancellations on the network of which I was not advised in advance. Upon becoming aware of these cancelled services via rail advocates, I sought a briefing from Queensland Rail. I should note that it has been my practice as minister that I listen to rail advocates and passengers, and seek advice from Queensland Rail or TransLink in order to reply to their questions or complaints. In regard to the cancellations on 30 September, the Treasurer and I, as shareholding ministers, received an information brief on 7 October on these cancellations. The brief noted that training on the Redcliffe peninsula line was causing strain on rostering but that 'to date, rostering for training has been successful, with minimal impact on normal operations'. The brief notes that there was a shortfall of driver numbers but reflects that recruitment drives are underway. I table that brief.

Tabled paper: Queensland Rail Briefing Note, endorsed 7 October 2016, for the Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games, Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe, titled 'Traincrew resourcing and cancelled services—Friday, 30 September 2016' [\[1940\]](#).

I sought further information about the matters raised in this brief and at a departmental senior executive leadership meeting—which I convene regularly—on 17 October I was advised that minor service alterations would continue to occur on Fridays whilst training on the new line was completed and that Queensland Rail was appropriately managing their train crew. At all stages of these briefings I was repeatedly assured by the CEO of Queensland Rail that these cancellations would last only for the month of October. On the afternoon of 20 October I was advised that there would likely be a large number of cancellations on the network the following day. I was also advised that in order to limit the cancellations two lines would be closed after 7 pm on Friday, 21 October and replaced with bus services. I was in Mount Isa at the time, having just completed a regional visit with the CEO of Queensland Rail.

The CEO then briefed me in person on more details of the planned cancellations. In that meeting the CEO also disclosed to me for the first time that QR personnel may have been aware of advice that there were train crew shortages that meant Queensland Rail was unable to deliver the 4 October timetable. Before returning to Brisbane, I ordered a meeting of Queensland Rail and the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the next morning. At this meeting I was informed by Queensland Rail that they were unable to maintain an acceptable level of service for coming weeks. My focus at this meeting was to minimise disruptions for commuters in the approaching peak period and understand the options for minimising impacts for commuters across the following week. Queensland Rail's preferred option for addressing train crew shortages was to implement an interim timetable with service alterations spread across the day to minimise peak impacts. I requested that the interim timetable be made with a full 24 hours notice to customers.

Shareholder ministers then requested that the Queensland Rail board convene an urgent meeting as soon as possible. We requested that the board address key matters including the cause of recent high levels of cancelled services and train crew shortages, and that the board satisfy itself with the interim proposal of the executive leadership team. The board convened on Sunday morning, and both I and the other shareholding minister, the Treasurer, dialled into the meeting remotely. On Sunday

evening I received details of the proposed interim timetable. It was uploaded and released to the public on the TransLink website by 4 am Monday, 24 October and media were advised of the changes that evening. The board also stated to shareholding ministers—

The Board and Responsible Ministers were not alerted to the extent of the shortages, or their impact on service delivery, until late last week.

In relation to the interim timetable the board stated—

The Board has carefully considered the information provided by management in relation to the interim timetable and crewing arrangements, and is satisfied that the arrangements will allow current operations to stabilise in order to meet required service levels for the interim timetable.

This morning the Premier has made clear that by the end of this week a timetable for city passenger rail services to operate until the end of the year will be released. Further, the timetable for services for next year will be developed ahead of the implementation of the Fairer Fares package for the travelling public in the new year.

Last night, following media inquiries from the *Courier-Mail*, I discovered the existence of a report held by Queensland Rail since at least January 2016. The report commissioned by QR from Indec clearly shows that personnel inside of the organisation were aware of the significant risks associated with major projects as a consequence of a train driver shortage. There has been a fundamental failure of management, and last week we saw the CEO and chair of Queensland Rail resign. Helen Gluer said last week—

My advice to the Minister prior to last Thursday (20 October) was Queensland Rail absolutely believed it would be able to deliver the timetable as scheduled from the 4th of October, clearly we have got that wrong.'

I table the draft Indec report received by me late last night at 9.20.

Tabled paper: Document, dated January 2016, by Indec titled 'Train Service Delivery Review: Report—Draft' [1941].

This morning Mr Paul Pluta emailed media outlets a document purporting to be the final copy of this document. I have asked the acting CEO to verify this document this morning. However, in the interests of transparency, I table that document.

Tabled paper: Document, dated February 2016, by Indec titled 'Train Service Delivery Review: Report' [1942].

I have written to the acting CEO of Queensland Rail regarding this matter. I also table that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 1 November 2016, from the Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games, Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe, to the Acting CEO Queensland Rail, Mr Neil Scales, regarding the report titled 'Train Service Delivery Review' conducted by Indec for Queensland Rail in January 2016 [1943].

Again, as the opposition have stated, the seeds of this issue were sown long ago and we need to get to the bottom of this. This morning I have written to the Leader of the Opposition calling on him to allow the release of all relevant briefing notes, reports and other documents under the former government concerning the following matters: train driver recruitment; recruitment freeze; the design and fit-out of the next generation rolling stock including planned operating models for drivers and guards; and the franchise of Queensland Rail including consultants' reports and preparatory work done by or for the government, Queensland Rail or Treasury. I have asked that the Leader of the Opposition release these documents to the investigation led by Philip Strachan for his immediate review, and I table that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 1 November 2016, from the Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games, Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe, to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Tim Nicholls MP, regarding the independent investigation into the current disruptions to the Citytrain timetable [1944].

With regard to training progress, to date there are 198 qualified guards signed off for Kippa-Ring and 129 qualified drivers. There are still 218 drivers and 131 guards required to train on the Petrie-Kippa-Ring corridor. At its core there are issues of both a driver shortfall and some work practices.

I can announce some measures agreed to yesterday between our employees and the acting CEO in order to free up driver capacity and speed up driver training. One, the existing rosters and roster practices, namely the 20 minutes break after 2½ hours, will be optimised by implementing certain aspects of a proposed new train crew enterprise agreement about working hours and meal breaks. Two, Queensland Rail has proceeded to reemploy recently retired train divers who wish to return to work on either a full-time or a part-time basis in accordance with existing safety practices. Three, Queensland Rail will fast-track the training processes for existing trainee drivers and trainee guards with a focus on increasing the number of route tutors to assist with the training and the appointment of a new route tutor coordinator. Queensland Rail believes that progressing on these issues will free up drivers through more flexible work arrangements in order to deliver more reliable train times.

I am 100 per cent focused on addressing this mess and these challenges, and I will continue to update the House as they progress.