




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Rail, Train Crew

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (10.20 am): I wish to provide the House with of an update on the Citytrain crewing issues. As I have previously advised the House, the Palaszczuk government recently doubled Queensland Rail's train crewing recruitment target, announcing an additional 100 drivers and 100 guard positions to ensure that we have enough train crew to deliver the services that the travelling public deserves into the future. Let us not forget that the last major recruitment of drivers before December last year under the Palaszczuk government was in 2011 under another Labor government undertaken by the now Premier. We have heard details before in this place about the job losses suffered by Queensland Rail during the intervening period and, frankly, we are now playing catch-up.

Targeting recruitment is a critical first step in delivering on the government's five-point plan, because we need a pool of recruits to enter into the training programs as soon as possible so that we have the train crew numbers that we need going forward. That is why I was pleased to confirm yesterday that a number of candidates have progressed through the first stage of testing to become a trainee driver or guard as part of Queensland Rail's fast-tracked recruitment.

As I have informed the House previously, Queensland Rail received 394 applications for a trainee driver position and 505 applications to be a trainee guard in the latest round of recruitment. Now, all applicants have undergone the first stage of testing and we can report that 231 driver candidates and 227 guard candidates have progressed to the second stage.

Panel interviews began last week—on 21 November—and psychomotor testing is now underway to test candidates' situational awareness, reaction time, visual coordination, stress recovery and speed and trajectory judgement. It is critical that candidates undergo rigorous testing to ensure that they are the right people for the job. These are safety-critical roles.

Drivers need to learn thousands of signals, whistle boards and stopping points. Before the driver even gets to the classroom, there is extensive testing for competency, attention span and concentration levels, because safety is Queensland Rail's No. 1 priority. A train can travel up to 140 kilometres an hour and there can be up to 700 passengers on a fully loaded train. We need to maintain rigorous standards to find the right candidate and ensure that high safety standards are always maintained.

Queensland Rail is now quickly moving to fill these safety-critical roles through a process that involves short-listing, interviews, psychomotor assessments and medical assessments in line with national standards. Training for drivers and guards is competency based and involves a range of learning modules, including theoretical and practical components. Queensland Rail is currently investigating opportunities to accelerate current training time frames, as I am currently advised that it can take around 12 months to become a qualified train driver and about three months to become a qualified train guard.

As part of the government's five-point plan, I have tasked Queensland Rail with doing everything that we can to speed up the training process, but safety must always be the key. To that end, I have been advised that discussions have been held with Melbourne Metro about working together to boost training capacity in Queensland. That offer was made at the start of the month to the acting CEO and is being considered. I should note that I am advised that Melbourne trains utilise significantly different train systems and, therefore, that we need to proceed carefully in assessing whether this offer would assist in the speeding up of training. That work is currently underway in line with the five-point plan and nothing has been ruled out at this stage.

On our recruitment drive, Queensland Rail has finalised the internal recruitment process. It will assess the capacity and ability of all applicants and, where further vacancies exist, look at external recruitment. I will continue to work closely with Queensland Rail to successfully deliver the five-point plan and look at options to ensure that we can fast-track plans to bring on the more drivers and guards that we need.