




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (12.44 pm): I must say that reading these committee reports is like taking a trip down memory lane. It is great to be able to get back up again and speak about Labor Party mismanagement. I am expecting to be able to do it a little bit more often over the coming months and years as their projects roll out—or do not roll out. We have already seen the rollout of the four-year State Infrastructure Plan. The member for Gladstone talked about rail projects. The problem is that the only new rail project that is mentioned in the State Infrastructure Plan that has been funded is the next generation rolling stock. The top five projects in the State Infrastructure Plan are all projects that were put in place by the LNP, secured by the LNP as public-private partnerships. I thank the member for Gladstone for his endorsement of the LNP's program.

Unlike Labor, the LNP is getting twice the number of trains for the same amount of money. According to the Auditor-General's report, Labor got two-thirds of the number of trains for 88 per cent of the money. One would have to say that that is probably a pretty good result for Labor, because the previous report that I just spoke to told us that we were getting a wastewater plant that is delivering no water and dams that are not connected to pipelines.

When I look through this report I recall the events of 2011. This report is a scathing indictment on the Labor government's management of Queensland Rail. I ask members to remember that I am referring to what was left of Queensland Rail after the Labor Party sold it off without telling anyone about it. We remember the former transport minister, the former member for Ipswich, who on one day was asked, 'Are there any plans to sell Queensland Rail?' With hand on heart she swore, 'There are no plans to sell Queensland Rail.' The next day the then treasurer walked in and said, 'We are selling Queensland Rail.' He did not even tell his own side. As per usual, Labor's complicit mates in the union—Owen Doogan and the RTBU—just faded off into the background. They were standing up for workers' rights—as long as they still had a job left at the end of it.

It is also good to reflect on some of the comments that were made in the Auditor-General's report about the board. The member for Gladstone mentioned that there was quite a lot of chopping and changing around on the board. Who was the chief executive of Queensland Rail back in 2011? The name Scurrah comes to mind. For those members who were not here at the time, or do not remember, or were not paying attention, I point out that Paul Scurrah was the partner of Nicole Scurrah, the chief of staff of the then premier, Anna Bligh. I remember Queensland's million-dollar couple. Paul Scurrah was in charge of the process. In his report the Auditor-General found the following—

... ignored or did not want to advise government on the full costs of the project, preferring instead to communicate costs in what they perceived to be more palatable portions ... could not establish whether information was withheld intentionally.

The report noted further—

... the distinction is important, as it is the difference between maladministration and possible malfeasance.

That is a difference between someone being clueless—like this government—or someone being deliberately misleading, like the previous Labor government.

When did Mr Scurrah leave? A media statement dated 24 November 2011 states that he had resigned, effective 2 December. In that media statement Paul Scurrah is praised. It states—

... Paul has led the Executive Team in delivering first class results for Queensland Rail Limited ...

What a damning indictment on Queensland Rail this report is: \$50 million—almost 25 per cent of the total project cost of \$221 million—thrown away, not able to be spent on roads, not able to be spent on other railways, not able to be spent on fixing up the Westlander, not able to be spent on fixing up the carriages and providing a better service or improving stations. Fifty million dollars was wasted.

Do members know where the money came from? It was borrowed. I remember this report coming across my desk and the horror of the then new board of Queensland Rail, which has been commended for fixing the problems. There was a new board, new management and a government and a minister who was prepared to look into the matter, not to simply sit there and be told what to do by bureaucrats like the then transport minister, Annastacia Palaszczuk. The minister looked into the situation and got on with the job of fixing the problem. That is what this report says. It was a failure under Labor, but fixed under the LNP. That is what always happens in this state and that is what will no doubt happen again at the next election.