



Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**


**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

---

Record of Proceedings, 1 November 2016

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Queensland Rail**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.32 am): It is time for this transport minister to get the sack. This is the time and this is the place. This is the test of a Premier who does not have the guts to take on the factions in her own party. We have seen nothing but craven cowardice on the part of a Premier who will not hold her own minister responsible.

The transport minister should be sacked for a whole variety of reasons. He should be sacked for wrecking the train system across South-East Queensland. He should be sacked for failing to ask simple questions of his advisers that could have revealed the looming crisis. He should be sacked for failing to keep Queenslanders advised of cuts to services. He should be sacked for causing confusion and frustration to commuters and passengers on the rail network in South-East Queensland. Above all, he should be sacked for letting three public servants take the fall when he is the one legally and morally responsible for this mess. This is Stirling Hinchliffe's mess and no-one else's.

Under Minister Hinchliffe's watch, Queensland commuters have been subjected to the biggest debacle in Queensland Rail's 151-year history. After coming to office in 2012, the LNP government took steps to fix the train running schedule—to get trains running on time because the schedule had slipped to as low as 84 per cent under former transport minister Anastacia Palaszczuk. Not only were commuters paying more—15 per cent more year on year on year—they were getting less for it. What has become clear is that the system needed to be fixed.

We know what the Labor answer to fixing a problem is. Labor's answer to fixing any problem is to hire more public servants, to spend a poultrice of money and to not measure the outcome only the inputs. That is all they ever do. How much more can we put in, not how much more are we getting out of it. That was the history of Labor. It is still the history of Labor. It is the history now with 9,000 extra public servants, and what is happening is a rail crisis right on their lap. We have a rail crisis. We have a kids in care crisis. We have a housing affordability crisis with a minister who will not take responsibility for it. We have a hospital blow-out at the Cairns hospital and health service of \$80 million with a health minister who will not take responsibility for it—a health minister who has the hypocrisy to come into this place and say that we should say sorry. He was part of a government that presided over the next biggest debacle in public administration in Queensland, the Health payroll system, at \$1.2 billion. It was a huge mess, and he now comes in here and says that we should apologise. This is someone who said that he is never going to apologise.

It is the same script out of the same playbook by the Minister for Transport now. Remember back in those days Paul Lucas saying that it was not his fault, it was the bureaucrats' fault and Rob Swarten saying it was not his fault, it was the company's fault. What do we have this time? We have Stirling Hinchliffe saying it is not his fault; it is the board's fault, it is the CEO's fault, it is QR's fault—it is anyone's fault. There is no sense of responsibility whatsoever.

It is time for Stirling Hinchliffe as Minister for Transport to go. He is a minister who is happy to face Queenslanders when there is good news to share. He is happy to cut the ribbon on the Redcliffe peninsula line. He issued three press releases in three days in February about the New Generation Rollingstock. He did not mention that the former government had ordered them—and we did order them. We delivered more trains more effectively and in a faster time than Labor was able to do. We got on and did it. It was a project, I might say, supervised by the current Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet when he was working as the chief executive of Projects Queensland. But as soon as it goes pear-shaped under his watch he runs for the hills. He becomes, as the member for Glass House has said, the shadow minister for transport—the 'Sergeant Schultz' of the Queensland parliament. We have 'Captain Risky' and 'Sergeant Schultz'. The only person who has really been happy this week is the Treasurer, because it has taken the heat off his failures all the way through.

**Mr Bleijie:** Jackie is happy.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I think the Deputy Premier is a little happy about it too—threw him under the bus.

Let us look at when the Minister for Transport really does want to do something, something really close to his heart, something really important and for the benefit of Queenslanders. He can change the entire voting system on 18 minutes notice. He can change and rig the voting system for his own political benefit in 18 minutes, but he cannot get a train to run on time when it is supposed to, and he cannot get an organisation that has billions of dollars with a whole department sitting behind him to provide the services that we need. The gold standard for action for this minister is an 18-minute change to the voting system for Queensland, but he still fails to deliver trains for passengers. Over the past four weeks we have seen rolling cancellations of train services, confused commuters, crammed trains and a travelling public left in the lurch because the transport minister cannot communicate.

It seems the only people who are not listening to the commuters of Queensland, who are fed up with this service, are the Premier and the transport minister. We have been out talking to those commuters. We have been going to the railway stations. We were down at Cleveland last week. We talked to people at Toombul, Woollooin and other stations throughout South-East Queensland, and the commuters of South-East Queensland are fed up with this system. What do we hear from the minister time and again? Nothing at all. He says he is not to blame. He says trust him; he will fix it. He is all promises and no action and the travelling public do not believe him.

What we have heard today from the minister in his 20-minute statement does nothing to provide the consumer, the travelling public of Queensland, with any confidence that he knows what he is doing. He spent most of the time trying to pass the blame on to someone else. Not once did he stand up and say, 'I asked the question have we got enough drivers to run the trains.' He said, 'I got the reports. I received the information,' but did he ever do what he is paid to do—ask the hard questions: 'Will there be enough drivers on the trains not only for the opening day and the ribbon cutting ceremony, but for every other day when the commuters expect it?' That is what he is paid to do, not to just be a recipient of advice, not just to sit there and have the briefing notes pass across his desk like some fleeting piece of paper that he does not have to consider. He is meant to ask the questions, to challenge the CEOs, to challenge his department and he has failed to do that.

We have heard blame passed around. This is what the Premier said on 5 June 2012 in relation to past actions. She stated—

The loudest message that is coming through to us is that Queenslanders are already sick and tired of this government playing the blame game. They want the government to get on and govern, to deliver what they said they would deliver.

On 8 August what did she say? She said—

This government wants to live in the past and continue to blame the former Labor government.

There was plenty to blame them about. She went on—

It is about time that this health minister stood up and took responsibility for his actions ...

When is the transport minister going to stand up? It was the now Treasurer who in 2014 said—

Queenslanders are sick and tired of this government trying to con them. They are sick of the broken promises—  
and they want the government to act.

The sauce that is good for the goose is sauce for the gander as well. This minister should live up to the standards that this Premier has espoused in this House. If he will not do the honourable thing, if he will not abide by the Westminster convention and do what the chief executive and the chairman of Queensland Rail did, then the Premier should sack him.

Let us just deal with the story in relation to trainer drivers. Page 19 of the Indec report says that the pool of 31 tutor drivers is more than twice the pool of 12 trainee drivers. There are more than twice the number of tutor drivers than there are trainee drivers in the system. There is no shortage of trainers; there is a shortage of people getting in the system to work because of the EBA rules.

As a result of this, the loss of confidence and everything that is going on, I seek leave to move a motion of no confidence in the Minister for Transport.

**Ms TRAD:** I rise to a point of order. This issue has been ventilated all morning. This is clearly an abuse of parliamentary process—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Quiet. I will listen to the point of order.

**Ms TRAD:** This is quite clearly an abuse of parliamentary process. There is an opportunity for those opposite to have informed the parliament—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, can you please repeat the wording of the motion you seek to move?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I seek leave to move a motion of no confidence in the Minister for Transport.

**Ms TRAD:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member has to seek leave before moving a motion of no confidence. It is a two-step process. He erred.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I seek leave to move a motion without notice.

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister for Education. I am trying to respond. The question is that leave be granted. Those of that opinion say 'aye'. Those against 'no'. I think the noes have it.

**Mr Seeneey:** Divide!

**Ms Trad:** Divide!

**Mr SPEAKER:** A division can only be called by those who were not the loudest voice. I rule that the government has the loudest voice, so a division has been called by the member for Callide. Ring the bell for four minutes.

Division: Question put—That leave be granted to move a motion without notice.

**AYES, 43:**

**LNP, 42**—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeneey, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

**INDEPENDENT, 1**—Pyne.

**NOES, 43:**

**ALP, 42**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

**INDEPENDENT, 1**—Gordon.

The numbers being equal, Mr Speaker cast his vote with the noes.

Resolved in the negative.