



Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 1 March 2017

MOTION

Queensland Rail, Timetable; Order for Production of Documents



Mr BUTCHER (Gladstone—ALP) (6.27 pm): Mr Speaker—

Mrs Smith: Another audition.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you very much. It is great to see the member for Mount Ommaney sitting on the opposition front bench. I rise tonight to make a contribution—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I cannot hear the member for Gladstone. As I said, if I cannot then Hansard cannot. Please start again.

Mr BUTCHER: I rise to speak against the motion and in favour of the amendment. A little birdie told me that the One Nation leader is not in the chamber tonight but is in the Strangers Bar. I looked around to see who from the LNP is not present in the chamber. Where is the member for Whitsunday? Where is the Leader of the Opposition? Maybe they are in communication over there while they are having a coffee.

Mr WATTS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is a longstanding convention to not talk about members' absence from the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, you are correct. I call the member for Gladstone to not continue with that line of debate.

Mr BUTCHER: As the Assistant Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, I know that Queenslanders deserve reliable and on-time public transport. The Premier and the Deputy Premier have made it clear that our government accepts all 36 recommendations of the Strachan inquiry and that they will be implemented. Anyone who has read the Strachan report will know that the problems that have manifested in Queensland Rail did not happen overnight and reforming Queensland Rail will not happen overnight. It will take time, and we are getting on with the job. We are doing that. This includes recommendation 5 of the Strachan report to assess the sustainability of service levels under the current timetable which was implemented on 23 January 2017.

I have read the comments in the Strachan report, including that the board did not approve the revision to the previous interim timetable that had operated in late 2016. It is clear from the Strachan report that there were structural and governance problems in the organisation leading to significant problems that are laid bare in the report. We have already put in place a new chair, Mr Phillip Strachan, who will be tasked with restoring strong governance processes at QR. I know the work that Mr Strachan has done in his previous role at Rio Tinto and I have full faith in his ability to deliver these recommendations to bring a reliable rail system for the state of Queensland. This work is already happening and, unlike the LNP, we are not going to cut corners because these recommendations need to be implemented properly to ensure that we put in place sustainable and effective solutions.

We all know that the LNP was obsessed with cuts. It cut jobs, it cut front-line services and it cut corners in Queensland Rail. When ordering the new stock, it reminds me of the old Coles ad with the big red finger—‘Down, down, prices are down. We want all the world to know that you are saving, and you are saving for real. Down, down, down they go!’ The Newman-Nicholls LNP government initiated an enterprise-wide efficiency program in Queensland Rail. The 2013-14 Queensland Rail annual report stated that this was about ‘the application of contestability principles to the service delivery model’ and that this ‘agenda aligns’ with the Peter Costello led Commission of Audit to privatise Queensland Rail under a franchise and lease agreement. We know what that means: the LNP was getting ready to privatise QR.

It was the LNP and the members for Clayfield and Indooroopilly that bypassed the Queensland Rail board to hire Campbell Newman’s mate Glen Dawe. We know now from the commission of inquiry that it was Glen Dawe who decided to suspend QR driver training in 2014. This independent report clearly states that a Queensland Rail workforce and resource plan forecast a deficit of drivers and guards as far back as 2013. If it was not for Campbell Newman’s buddy getting the job and the LNP’s plan to sell QR, we would have 30 additional drivers today. I cannot help but notice that the members for Clayfield and Indooroopilly have stayed very quiet on these sections of the Strachan report.

This motion is a blatant attempt to distract who is really responsible for the issues at Queensland Rail, but I am not interested in being distracted by the silly political games which we are seeing here tonight. As the assistant minister I am interested in working alongside the Deputy Premier of Queensland to make sure that we deliver on the recommendations of the Strachan report and to make sure that Queensland Rail is able to provide the services that Queenslanders deserve. We know that this motion is a political stunt and I will not be supporting it but will be supporting the amendment and the amended motion.