



Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Rail

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (2.37 pm): Although it is 529 days since the large-scale disruptions and the drastic cut in train services back on 7 October 2016, it heralded the official start of rail fail. Train travel, sadly, remains a complete nightmare for people in South-East Queensland. Services are constantly delayed or cancelled due to ongoing track issues. If trains do turn up, they are usually so full that passengers are obliged to wait for another one.

Sadly, this is what we have come to expect under the watch of four different ministers. Rather than tackle the problems making train travel a complete nightmare for commuters, a succession of Labor government transport ministers have been playing musical chairs with this portfolio. First of all, we had Jackie Trad changing the design of the New Generation Rollingstock trains in response to demands from the unions for special cubbyholes so that guards could sit down on their shift instead of actively patrolling—

Mr MANDER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. We have members continuously interjecting who are not sitting in their proper seats.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The interjections are not being taken and I have not heard any. I remind members that if you wish to interject you need to be in your rightful seat, otherwise warnings will be given.

Mr MINNIKIN: This retrofitting and protracted negotiation with the train builder Bombardier delayed the delivery of the new trains by many months and contributed to new problems relating to disabled access to carriages which, sadly, still require fixing today. The next to grab the chair was Stirling Hinchliffe, who oversaw the union maintaining its closed door driver recruitment approach. As the problems continued to mount, he pressed the ejector seat—or, rather, had it pushed for him by his colleagues. Then Jackie Trad came back. She was given another try, although there was little to show for her second attempt except lucrative overtime and meal breaks secured for the train drivers.

Minister Mark Bailey then took the chair. Despite the daily debacles, for whatever reason he is still there, dancing to the music of the RTBU. The two constants in this sorry saga have been the Palaszczuk Labor government and their puppetmasters, the RTBU. Is it any wonder that, with a lazy government and a dominating union determined to keep things the same, the problems that we are seeing with rail fail are persisting?

With the pressure of public discontent, Labor eventually adopted its default strategy and called for a review of Queensland Rail's train-crewing practices, resulting in the Strachan report. The Strachan report at page 30 states—

... a sustained reliance on overtime to meet service levels. In October 2016, this overreliance triggered record numbers of compulsory rest periods for train crew, which was the primary cause of the cancellations on 21 October 2016. The Commission considers that overtime should be used as a measure to address temporary increases in demand—such as special events—rather than to compensate for structural deficits in train crew.

Amongst other things, the Strachan report identified very specifically that the union's closed shop hiring rule for new train drivers was a contributing factor to the rail network meltdown and recommended an external hiring drive. At that time it was noted in the report that QR preferred to operate with a five to 10 per cent undersupply of train crew, which was driven largely by the union negotiated practice of providing overtime opportunities. Nothing has changed. We have had confirmation overnight through the question that the member for Everton submitted that, while train driver recruitment practices continue to drag out, train drivers are receiving anything up to \$79,000 in overtime payments.

In terms of the blame game, despite Labor entering its fourth year in government, it refuses to accept responsibility for addressing the remaining issues with the NGR trains and is, of course, happy to blame the LNP. Notwithstanding the assessment of the NGRs by two Labor appointed executives, the blame game continues today. Labor is still more focused on political pointscoreing than fixing the problems. It truly is a disgrace.

I have a suggestion for the minister: instead of checking 600 outstanding private emails, how about he concentrate on doing his job and provide the people of Queensland with a public transport system which is reliable, frequent and affordable? QR has a proud history, but under Minister Bailey's watch the reputation and the direction of this fine organisation is well and truly off the rails.