




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mount Isa, Rail Line

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.00 am): After more than 160,000 hours of work to replace 120,000 tonnes of ballast, repair more than 200 sites and rebuild 38 bridge abutments, I am pleased to announce that the Mount Isa rail line is back on line. That 1,000-kilometre rail corridor, which connects our thriving mineral industries to the world and our regional communities, is a critical link in our Queensland economy. When it was lashed earlier this year by an unprecedented monsoonal event, with record rain and flooding earlier, the Palaszczuk Labor government made the line's repair a top priority.

Over 11 weeks, more than 400 Queensland Rail staff and contractors worked around the clock to rebuild the rail line from Hughenden to Richmond, from Maxwellton to Nonda, and from Tibarri to Oorindi. This mammoth effort culminated yesterday in the first train travelling from Mount Isa to Townsville, marking an important milestone between our rich minerals province and one of North Queensland's largest ports.

Not only did the dedicated task force restore the line in the toughest of conditions—and I inspected the line on a 40-plus-degree day, and there were many of those, in full PPE gear; they also seized the opportunity to boost the productivity of the line while they repaired it, cutting travel times and ensuring that our supply chain helps industry grow and support local jobs. After rerailing and reconditioning key sections, end-to-end run times have been reduced by up to 50 minutes. That is good news for Queensland's economy—a proven world-class minerals producer and exporter adding 7,000 Queensland resource jobs since 2015 and driving a renewable energy boom in our sunshine state.

I welcome federal Labor's announcement of \$100 million to boost the Mount Isa to Townsville rail corridor's productivity and resilience, adding to the Palaszczuk government's \$380 million commitment. Both are very substantial commitments to North Queensland, which means more jobs for North Queenslanders and for Queenslanders generally.

On Friday, I visited Townsville to meet with some of the hardworking Queensland Rail staff who were instrumental in bringing the rail line back on line. Their work not only restored the rail line but also provided a much needed injection for communities and businesses in the north-west. By working together with the Department of Housing and Public Works, bustling workers camps were established in Richmond and Julia Creek during the repairs, where local businesses were tapped on the shoulder to provide food, cleaning services and supplies. I would like to acknowledge all those who worked with Queensland Rail to restore the line, including engineers, contractors, Aurizon, local councils and Transport and Main Roads staff. Queenslanders band together when times get tough. This House should be proud of the workers and the work that was done over the past 11 weeks to restore the Mount Isa to Townsville rail line.