




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR MILLER

Record of Proceedings, 19 September 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Rail, Regional Projects

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.03 am): Under the Palaszczuk Labor government, major rail projects are driving a regional rail jobs boom in Queensland. Queensland Rail projects underway now from Toowoomba to Townsville are supporting more than 1,150 jobs. The largest investment, the \$100 million north coast line upgrade between Townsville and Rockhampton, started in July and will support more than 300 construction jobs. The replacement of 20 timber bridges between Gympie and Cairns is an \$86 million project that will support a further 280 jobs. Later this month, work wraps up on a \$21 million project to modernise Bundaberg's rail signalling system and upgrade seven level crossings. A \$28 million project to replace 18 ageing timber rail bridges between Rosewood and Chinchilla will have supported 200 jobs once that project ends next month. Work to lower 11 historic rail tunnels on the Toowoomba range to allow for larger container trains is expected to finish in early 2020, having supported 130 Darling Downs construction jobs and boosting productivity on that rail line.

Queensland's rail network is an essential part of our state's freight supply chain, supporting regional economies and trade through our publicly owned ports. The Palaszczuk Labor government will keep investing in Queensland's rail network to improve its efficiency and safety for passengers and freight. Rail has been part of Queensland's history for more than 150 years. There is a massive opportunity to support regional jobs through upgrades and maintenance of our vast rail network.

The February floods in North Queensland and North-West Queensland that washed out hundreds of sections of the Mount Isa Line showed how much our economy, particularly the North West Minerals Province, relies on our rail network. An amount of \$50 million was invested in restoring the line, with more than \$30 million going back into regional economies through the employment of contractors and the purchase of materials. Economic resilience and regional opportunities in North Queensland will also be supported by the Palaszczuk Labor government's \$380 million commitment over five years to maintain and upgrade the Mount Isa line, which we kept in public hands. This state was built on the back of our roads and rail lines and we will continue to invest in them to support our growing population and the communities that rely on them, and we will not cut them like those opposite do.