




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2023

MOTION

Cost of Living

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (5.20 pm): I rise to support the amendment proposed to the motion and moved by the Minister for Transport and take the opportunity presented by this motion to discuss the ways in which the Palaszczuk Labor government is improving access to the public transport network throughout the state. Let me begin with the botched order of trains ordered by the Newman government. We could extend the sittings, because I want to talk for hours on what it did with the NGR trains. Those opposite exported jobs when they ordered trains to be built overseas and shipped into Queensland—and we know what happened—when there was a perfectly capable workforce in my electorate.

The decision by the Newman government hit the Maryborough community very hard. In fact, as I have often said, it made us the Detroit of Australia in Queensland. Not only did the LNP not care about jobs when it ordered these trains; it did not care about accessibility. The trains were delivered and were not compliant with national disability standards—something that the Palaszczuk Labor government has had to rectify. If the LNP wants to talk about cost blowouts, it should start with the \$335 million it is costing to refit the 75 NGR trains at the Downer facility in Maryborough. The trains are being refitted at Downer on time and on budget and the workers at Downer are doing a tremendous job.

As mentioned by the minister, I am proud that workers at Downer in my electorate have refitted 50 out of the 75 NGR trains to improve accessibility, with between eight and nine train sets in Maryborough at any time being upgraded. As the Downer staff are pulling the NGRs through Queen's Park, people line up and take photos. They are very proud of the work they are doing to the NGRs. They are very proud that they are refitting these trains that were made overseas. We on this side of the House believe in making public transport services more accessible for all Queenslanders, and we also believe in local jobs. We do not believe in outsourcing or exporting our jobs, particularly the train jobs that I love in my electorate.

Respect for people with a disability and a commitment to local jobs are two values noticeably absent from those opposite. Not only am I immensely proud of the work being done in my community to retrofit the NGR trains; I am absolutely delighted that we are building 65 brand new passenger trains through the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program. Let us begin! This is absolutely great. They will be the best accessibility trains ever built in Queensland. They are going to be fantastic because we have already developed a strong working relationship with accessibility advocates. We knew who to talk to when we wanted to learn how to make these trains more accessible. Believe you me, I have sat through plenty of meetings with the minister to talk about accessibility to ensure that everyone can board and exit these trains safely. I must commend the minister because he has done a fantastic job. He and his staff have done a fantastic job of making sure that happens. These trains will enter service with wider aisles. The trains will have the ability to lean into platforms like buses can, and this is a great

thing for people with a disability, wheelie walkers, prams et cetera. The trains will also have the ability to board and deboard people. We are going to put in a platform which is going to be fantastic for people to access the trains.

The member for Chatsworth—and this is very interesting—said that this is like flushing money down the proverbial toilet. We know about his tough love. We know that the member for Chatsworth wants to give us tough love. I have said to him before, ‘I don’t want your tough love. Neither do the people of Queensland and neither do the people who use the new trains built at Torbanlea.’ They do not want his tough love. They want to be able to access and board these trains safely. As the member for Maiwar said, we want people to use these trains throughout Queensland and particularly in the south-east corner. We do not want the member for Chatsworth’s tough love. We want to support local jobs and we want to make sure these trains are accessible for all people in the south-east corner.

I want to thank the minister and the Premier for their support for my community. It has been unwavering. I want to put that on the record. I thank the minister and the government for extending the train contract at Torbanlea to 35 years. It has given my community and the young people in my community a job—a career—and will make them stay in our community. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Premier.