

Question on Notice

No. 1117

Asked on 1 December 2020

MS A LEAHY ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide patronage figures for the Westlander Rail Service for each year from 2015 to present and indicate the level of government subsidy in dollar terms, for this service for each year (reported separately)?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Warrego for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government recognises the importance of continued investment in our public transport network.

The Westlander connects communities along the outback route, from Brisbane to Charleville, with two return services per week. The journey, which takes 17 hours and 10 minutes, travels 777 kilometres through the Darling Downs and South West Queensland.

This service provides a vital connection for Queenslanders visiting family or friends, or those attending hospital or specialist appointments and are unable to travel by other modes of transport. It also offers a transport option for school boarders, especially in the Toowoomba region.

Typically, there are approximately 4000 journeys on *The Westlander* each year. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions were implemented and *The Westlander* was temporarily suspended from 30 March to 27 June 2020, when the service returned at a reduced timetable and with reduced capacity, due to social distancing measures on board. As such, patronage in 2019–20 is lower than in previous years.

From 24 September 2020, *The Westlander* services resumed full timetabled operations, with social distancing and additional COVID-19 measures still in place.

	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20
Patronage	4984	3677	3946	4381	4298	3084
Government Subsidy (\$)	11,665,773	10,668,273	11,175,981	11,406,210	13,755,994	13,326,937