

## Question on Notice

No. 086

Asked on 20 April 2004

**MR Rowell** asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

### QUESTION:

With reference to the Cairns to Brisbane tilt train—

- (1) (a) What is the capacity of the train each journey with passengers that can be carried and (b) over the period of the train's operation, what has been the percentage of passengers carried each journey?
- (2) Will he provide the viability of the operation to date in relation to the capital investment and operating costs?
- (3) Has there been a survey conducted on client satisfaction which includes the shortcomings of the service?
- (4) Are there any changes intended with the service; if so, what are they and when will they occur?

### ANSWER:

(1) (a) The passenger-carrying capacity of each of the diesel tilt trains running between Brisbane and Cairns is 173 passengers including 6 spaces for passengers in wheelchairs.

(1) (b) Over the period 15 June 2003 (the date of commencement of operations) to 31 March 2004, 55,150 passengers have travelled on the 247 train trips provided each way between Brisbane and Cairns, an average of 223 passengers per trip. The popularity of the new service is so high that QR is able to book passengers into seats vacated by passengers travelling for part of the journey, particularly over the daylight running section between Mackay and Cairns. This explains how the average number of passengers per trip can be greater than the train's capacity.

The average passenger trip length for the 1,681 kilometre train trip is 1,000 kilometres.

(2) The high occupancy rate has translated into higher than budgeted revenue of \$8.7 million for the period 15 June 2003 to 31 March 2004. I am unable to provide the operating costs for this period as QR only calculates operating costs for each individual Traveltrain service annually. All long distance rail passenger services and

some bus and air services are subsidised by government as a service to the people of Queensland. The new train was not expected to fully recover operating and capital costs. The total capital cost of the two diesel tilt trains was \$138 million.

(3) QR has commissioned a Customer Satisfaction Research Survey about customers' trips on the Cairns tilt train. This research will look into the overall level of satisfaction and ticket details about the trip on the Cairns tilt train, perception and attitudes about train travel, satisfaction with train and station characteristics and satisfaction with specific travel aspects. Following receipt of this report in mid 2004, QR will consider changes that would improve this service. Clearly based on the excellent patronage figures, passengers are voting with their feet.

(4) The Cairns tilt train service forms part of the Transport Service Contract for Traveltrain services between Queensland Transport and QR. The current contract runs until 30 June 2005. No changes to the service are envisaged at this stage.