

Question on Notice

No. 894

Asked on Wednesday, 6 June 2007

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the railway line between Warwick and Wallangarra, often referred to as the southern line, which is currently used by tourism trains from Brisbane and shortly to be used by the Southern Downs Steam Railway Association—

(1) Will he confirm that the railway line between Warwick and Wallangarra is not to be closed or mothballed?

(2) Will he also give an unqualified guarantee that (a) all infrastructure and facilities along the entire length of this railway line will remain in place, (b) all railway line infrastructure will be maintained at least to the current level so that the line continues to be in a useable condition, (c) all facilities along the entire length of this railway line will be maintained at least to the current level so that they continue to be in a useable condition, (d) no decision on the future of this railway line will be made or discussed without full consultation with stakeholder groups, interested parties and myself, (e) Queensland Rail will make every possible use of and promote this railway line as a tourist transport facility, (f) Queensland Rail will not prevent any properly accredited train travelling on the railway line between Brisbane and Wallangarra and (g) Queensland Rail will not place any signs, signals, devices or instructions on or near this railway line as a means of preventing its use by properly accredited tourist trains, the Southern Downs Steam Railway Association or any other interested group or business which desires to use the facility?

ANSWER:

(1) The Government currently has no plans to close the rail line between Warwick and Wallangarra.

(2 a, b, c) Queensland Rail (QR) has advised that they will continue to maintain fit for purpose railway infrastructure and facilities between Warwick and Wallangarra. The Government, through the Transport Services Contract (Rail Infrastructure), provides \$1.15m per annum to maintain the Warwick to Wallangarra line.

(2 d) I have been advised that Queensland Transport (QT) has extended an invitation to local communities to identify disused or under-utilised rail branch lines and work with Government to propose alternative infrastructure which would be of more benefit to the community/ies involved. Community approval is paramount and no closure would go ahead without full community consultation and support. The Government would not close the Warwick to Wallangarra line without the consent and support of the local community.

(2 e) QR's Passenger Services Group (PSG) currently runs historical tours along the Warwick to Wallangarra branch line, as well as ad-hoc chartered services on behalf of other community organisations.

(2 f, g) Advice from QR is that QR has not, and would not, prevent any properly accredited operator from travelling on the railway line between Brisbane and Wallangarra. It is important to note that currently the line between Stanthorpe and Wallangarra does not have any regular services running on it and is classified as a low use line. It is QR's policy that six months notice is given by any operator before commencing a service on a low use line. The six months notice is required so that all necessary inspections and maintenance works can be carried out before the train runs to ensure the safety of the operation.