

Question on Notice

No. 115

Asked on Wednesday, 5 March 2014

MR KNUTH asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR EMERSON) —

QUESTION:

With reference to numerous complaints from passengers, especially pensioners, concerning the extreme discomfort of seats and seating in economy class in the tilt train, Brisbane to Cairns—

Will the Minister restore the previous comfortable seats that were removed from the tilt train?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Dalrymple for the question.

The Cairns Tilt Train fleet is currently undergoing a major refurbishment. In addition to the two refurbished trains, a new third tilt train is under construction at Downer in Maryborough. The upgraded and expanded fleet is called the 'Spirit of Queensland'. The first train was launched on 28 October 2013.

The Spirit of Queensland trains have two accommodation options for customers: Railbed sleepers and Premium Economy seating. Every seat has personal on-demand entertainment. The project was established in preparation for the upcoming retirement of the traditional Sunlander train, which will be decommissioned at the end of 2014. The inclusion of private Railbeds ensured customers retained a sleeper option on the Brisbane to Cairns journey, the tilt trains previously only had upright seats.

While comfort and ergonomic testing was performed in the design phase of the Premium Economy seating, some customers have provided Queensland Rail with feedback about the level of comfort afforded by the current seating and, specifically the density of the seating foam. Queensland Rail is working with the seating suppliers to investigate alternative seating foam options to improve the comfort levels for customers.

The Spirit of Queensland fleet of three tilt trains will be in operation by the end of 2014.