

Question on Notice

No. 1095

Asked on 25 October 2022

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what financial assistance the government is providing to heritage rail operators?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Coomera for the question.

The Queensland Government recognises the important role that heritage railways contribute to regional tourism and sustaining Queensland's cultural rail heritage. The Queensland Government not only provides financial assistance, but also contributes through in-kind support.

Most tourist and heritage rail operators in Queensland are not-for-profit, volunteer-based organisations with limited resources. When Queensland's rail safety regulatory functions transitioned to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) in July 2017, most tourist and heritage operators were required to pay annual fees for the first time. The Queensland Government committed to pay the annual accreditation fees—a requirement to manage and operate a railway—on behalf of these operators for the foreseeable future.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) pays the ONRSR the accreditation fees on behalf of the tourist and heritage operators in Queensland. In 2022–23, this amounted to a total of \$49,922 paid as a Community Service Obligation.

In addition, where heritage rail operators typically hold a sublease from TMR for access to the rail corridors, there is only a nominal rental amount. In most cases, the railway infrastructure is also gifted to the various organisations, however, in return, the operator becomes responsible for both the infrastructure and the land, in lieu of TMR.

TMR officers also provide advice and support to heritage rail operators on land management matters and also provide—in some instances—a small monetary contribution to offset the costs of land management.

By way of example, TMR recently provided a contribution towards the cost of fixing one of the old railway bridges in north Queensland. The operator had provided a clear plan on how the contribution linked to a long-term strategy, and was able to contribute over 50 per cent of the capital required through its own fund-raising activities.

The Palaszczuk Government understands the importance of balancing its priorities to provide commuter and travel services across Queensland with the need to preserve and showcase its rich rail history for all to enjoy. Queensland Rail also seeks to contribute and provides support for many community organisations wherever and whenever possible, including most recently providing support for heritage services at the successful Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers.

Queensland Rail has provided a number of assets to heritage organisations across the State through a collection of direct donations and lease arrangements. Queensland Rail will continue to work with heritage organisations across the State and look for ways to help them service the communities in which they operate to enjoy our rail heritage.