



Speech by

## Hon. Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard Thursday, 29 October 2009

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Cairns Tilt Train, Collision Report

**Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (9.59 am): I rise to make a ministerial statement and table the report into an investigation regarding a tragic level crossing accident.

*Tabled paper:* Final report, Rail Safety Investigation QT2459, fatal collision between the Cairns tilt train and B-double truck, Rungoo level crossing, Queensland, 27 November 2008 [\[1215\]](#).

On 27 November last year, two QR train drivers were killed when the Cairns tilt train collided with a B-double truck at Rungoo, north of Ingham. My department instigated a full, independent, no-blame investigation under the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 to identify the cause of the collision and make recommendations to improve safety. The investigation was chaired by an investigator from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. It examined all aspects of the crash from obtaining eyewitness accounts to complex engineering and technical advice. The police investigation is separate and, I am advised, ongoing.

The investigation found that the primary cause of the crash was that the truck driver failed to respond to the flashing lights at the crossing. By the time he saw the train approaching, he was not physically able to stop in time to avoid a collision. Eyewitness accounts and subsequent testing confirm that the warning lights were operational. The report notes that the driver says that he did not see the flashing lights. It finds that the driver may have been experiencing a degree of fatigue which could have affected his performance and that he 'had a poor driving history in terms of licence suspension due to an accumulation of demerit points for speeding and logbook irregularities'. The investigation also confirmed that the level crossing was essentially compliant with the relevant standards and that neither the truck nor the train had any defects.

During the investigation QR temporarily suspended service of the Cairns tilt train while additional information on the safety of the cab structure was sought. The report found that, even if the train had been built to higher standards, it is unlikely that the survivable space in the cabin would have been significantly greater.

The report proposes a number of safety actions. First, it recommends that the Australian Transport Council further investigate intelligent systems to monitor heavy vehicle speed and compliance. I will raise this at the ATC meeting in Sydney next week. Second, it suggests that my department take further steps to ensure drug testing of drivers involved in serious crashes. I commit to that review being undertaken in conjunction with police. Third, it recommends that Queensland Rail make policy changes around passenger manifests and how to respond to offers of medical assistance. I have written to the CEO of QR on those matters today. I can also advise the House that work is continuing on the Rungoo crossing to improve safety, with boom gates to be installed by mid-November.

This was a tragic incident which led to the loss of two lives and which has caused distress to the many people involved. I offer my sincere condolences to the family, friends and co-workers of the two men who passed away.