

RAILWAYS (OPERATIONS AND ACCESS) (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

June 30, 2010

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:31): I too rise to speak to the Railways (Operations and Access) (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2010. I note the comments from the member for Goyder acknowledging that we had 24 gauges of rail, which was just ridiculous. Just look at the three most common gauges: narrow, standard and broad gauge. It became evident many years ago that that was two too many gauges in that instance.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: We need one gauge; absolutely. It was interesting to note that the Melbourne to Adelaide line used to be a broad gauge line. That was standardised with the Melbourne to Adelaide rail standardisation, or the MARS scheme, which took place in the early nineties. I happened to be a contractor on that scheme, and it was excellent work.

Mr Venning: Conflict of interest!

Mr PEDERICK: No; I acknowledge that it was a nice bit of work to pick up and add on to a bit of farm income. It was very interesting work, actually. I may digress, but we had a machine to undo the clips holding down the line so that they could be picked up and moved further into the concrete sleeper. This was essentially a maintenance machine. There were two of us operating it—a couple of farm lads—and it did not take long for it to blow up. It intrigued me, coming from—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: I should say that it broke down, to clarify that for the *Hansard*. It was interesting to note, coming from a self-employed background where if something broke you just fixed it—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: With fencing wire.

Mr PEDERICK: Probably with fencing wire, in response to the Minister for Transport. That has been done in more cases than one, to get something going with a bit of No. 8 fencing wire, I can assure you. What happened was that if the machine broke down you just jumped off and the union-staffed repair van was just up the track a bit. You sat down and they came up and fixed it. If you were energetic you could have used the hand tools, which we did for a while, but—

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: Did you have one of these things?

Mr PEDERICK: No; I did not have one of those little trolleys. I cannot remember now what they were called.

Mr Venning: Kalamazoo.

Mr PEDERICK: A kalamazoo; I did not operate one of those. The little machine we had was, I think, powered by a Honda motor and went steadily along the track. I do commend the guys who worked on that project for the manual labour involved. The steel line was pulled up in midair, and there was a lot of bending down, turning things around, shifting rubber matting, etc. It was backbreaking work. Thankfully they kept me on the unclipping machine for most of it, because it was very hard for a big bloke like me bending down to sleeper level. But I digress.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Maybe.

Mr Venning: You should try it now; it might do you good.

Mr PEDERICK: No, my back would still ache. It just goes to show the problem when you have different gauges in a rail system. We are steadily—although it is going to be a long time yet—getting things back to perhaps a standard gauge all over the state. I note the narrow gauge line on the far West Coast. They had a big harvest last year and Viterra, formerly ABB Grain, had a lot of grain to handle over there, as in other parts of the state. Obviously, there are speed limitations with that line, but it is a line that I believe was put in in a

hurry—that year's secondhand rail—and I guess the narrow gauge was the cheapest option. Rail is certainly something that will need to be upgraded over time to keep up with the growing demands, especially with more people accessing the use of it.

I note that the intention of this bill is to provide a consistent national system of economic regulation for nationally significant infrastructure, including the railway, obviously, and to implement efficiencies into the act, with these efficiencies based on recommendations, following an inquiry conducted by the Essential Services Commission of South Australia.

The ESCOSA inquiry into the access regime commenced in February 2009 with the release of an issues paper for public consultation. ESCOSA received submissions from ABB Grain, Asciano, Genesee & Wyoming Australia, Gypsum Resources Australia, Penrice Soda Products and Western Plains Resources.

Genesee & Wyoming Australia expressed concerns within its submission, highlighting that the issue of return on investment needed to be addressed in relation to economic efficiency. Penrice Soda Products highlighted the need for increased transparency in the form in which price information is being provided by the access provider to access seekers.

Just briefly, regarding Genesee & Wyoming, it operates lines throughout the Hammond electorate. In 2006, with the centenary of rail through the Mallee, the Pinnaroo line, it was very good of Genesee & Wyoming to get on board and run a special train out to Pinnaroo, and then pull up at all the stops heading back to Tailem Bend so that every rail siding had their celebration with the communities that have relied on that rail for 100 years. Genesee & Wyoming made a major contribution to the Mallee celebrating the centenary of rail in the region.

I note also, under mining, that ESCOSA expressed in the draft inquiry report that the access regime should be reviewed to ensure it is flexible and robust enough to respond to increased mining activities. It was pleasing to see that for quite a while Australian Zircon was utilising the Tailem Bend to Loxton line, with the mine being situated at Mindarie, on the edge—with the redistribution—of Hammond and Chaffey, but firmly in Hammond when the mine opened up. It was good to see them using containers to shift the Zircon sands. It is a bit of a pity that mine is in mothballs at the moment, but let us hope that it can get active again soon and promote more employment in the Mallee as time goes on.

We need access to rail by all stakeholders. I note, as the member for Schubert noted, Viterra, who has taken over ABB Grain, and that it is so much better that they are utilising rail as much as possible. It keeps trucks off roads. Having points like Tailem Bend in my electorate, where if it is made advantageous for the growers to deliver there to a strategic point, it is better to deliver grain there, instead of having all the semi-trailers and B-doubles heading into Adelaide, down Portrush Road and around to the Port.

I have done that trip a few times in a semi and it is fairly daunting, especially if you try to come down the hills one gear too high. You soon realise that it is not worth it, with smoking brakes. There is nothing surer than that you need to be coming down a hill in the same gear as if you had to climb it. I digress once again, but I support the bill and hope for its speedy passage through the house.