



BAROSSA WINE TRAIN

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (11:45): I rise to speak on this matter—

Members interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: I do not have enough time actually. I have only 10 minutes. I move an amendment to this motion. I move:

That the house expresses its willingness to work with the owners of the Barossa Wine Train to see its return to service.

The Rann government supports the return of the Barossa Wine Train. However, it believes it should be owned and operated by private enterprise. Having said that, it does not mean that the state government does not have a role to play in bringing this iconic train back into service. Clearly it does.

In recent years the government has provided advice and assistance to the Barossa Wine Train owners. I take this opportunity to stress that nothing has changed and that the government will continue to offer support to facilitate the train's return to service. As usual, Mr Venning's motion is ambiguous because it does not make clear whether the trial tourist train is intended to be the Barossa Wine Train or some other train. The only other rail vehicle option in South Australia that might come into consideration would be the use of TransAdelaide railcars, which are limited to suburban operations because of the lack of onboard toilet facilities.

Mr Venning should note that all Great Southern Railway's carriages operate on standard gauge wheels, effectively eliminating them from broad gauge Barossa Valley line. Tourist trains should not be confused with suburban rail services. Both are mutually exclusive, catering for entirely different markets with different motivations to travel and differing expectations, and focusing on different times of the day. In this light, it is reasonable to assume that Mr Venning's motion relates to the reintroduction of the Barossa Wine Train. This ceased operations in April 2003 when public liability insurance premiums spiralled to unaffordable levels.

A state government project team was established in 2006, comprising representatives from the Department of Trade and Economic Development, Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet—and I can see Mr Venning is very interested in this debate—and the South Australian Tourism Commission, with the intention of assisting the owners in getting the wine train back on track. The honourable member has left the chamber: that is very unparliamentary because I am not supposed to say that he has left the chamber.

In 2006 funding of \$50,000 was offered to the train's operators by the Premier on a one-off basis. Up to \$30,000 represented a previously committed contribution from the South Australia Tourism Commission to the train's owners towards a mutually agreed cooperative marketing plan. Subject to committing a clear return to service, the South Australian Tourism Commission would work closely with the train's owners, with a view to assisting in the development and distribution of the product and devising cooperative marketing initiatives to promote the experience, both locally and interstate.

I understand that the remaining \$20,000 (sourced from the Department of Trade and Economic Development), initially intended towards storage of the train, would now be renegotiated. While the government is keen to support a private operator resurrecting the Barossa Wine Train, we are now at the point where the onus and commercial incentive lies with the train's owner rather than the government.

The house should also note that the line beyond Nuriootpa to Angaston is currently not in good condition

and has not seen any rail movement for several years. Some resleepering would be necessary and the rail in the vicinity of the—

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: I am sure it would be; I am happy to—Angaston Cement Works is reported to be in poor condition. In the interests of the taxpayers, no investment in track rehabilitation should be contemplated for a trial service to operate as far as Angaston. However, I am advised that pivotal matters, such as track access, insurance, railcar storage and overall condition of the train, are hurdles that can be cleared.

I am advised that the key outstanding issue is achieving accredited rail safety status—something which Mr Venning neglected to mention.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Didn't talk about it.

Mr PICCOLO: No; we do not want to deal with the facts.

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: Well, putting rocks on the train and putting people on the train are two different things in terms of required safety standards. It should be stressed that direct government intervention would be inappropriate at this time. It is something to which the owner has to devote energy and resources in order to achieve the required status. For its part the Rann Labor Government remains committed—as do I as a nearby local member—to assisting with both funding and advice in order to get the train on track.

Mr Venning: Nothing happens.

Mr PICCOLO: Nothing happens? It was a rhetorical question, rather than a statement, Mr Venning. With this in mind I move an amendment to the motion. I cannot support Mr Venning's motion in its original form. It is lacking clarity and reflects Mr Venning's lack of knowledge of what is required. He expects the government to write a blank cheque. His motion means that the government would write a blank cheque. The government is not opposed to writing a cheque, but it wants to know what the numbers are. Mr Venning has stood up, as he always does, and asked the government to write a blank cheque.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PICCOLO: I have got the opposition excited: it is nice to see.

Mr Venning: Say something encouraging, something helpful.

Mr PICCOLO: You are upsetting the gallery, Mr Venning. Just to remind the house, the track from Nuriootpa to Angaston does not meet passenger train standards and therefore it cannot be used. The owner is at liberty to re-establish a service—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Resleeper it. We will add that to the list. There's another one—k'ching.

Mr PICCOLO: K'ching, that's right. I reiterate that the government stands ready to work with the owners to facilitate and support the reintroduction of the wine train, but we need to do it on sound terms.