



**Media Release / 29 June 2009**

## **Rail privatisation strands local cattle**

Queensland's grazing industry could be an early casualty of State Government plans to privatise Queensland Rail (QR).

Graziers have reported a statewide shortage of cattle trains to take livestock to markets and abattoirs.

Rail, Tram and Bus Union State President Bruce Mackie said locomotives and resources normally used for cattle trains were being redirected to coal haulage.

The RTBU has vowed to fight against the Queensland government's sell-off of rail, ports, roads and forestry assets to balance the State budget.

A series of regional forums are being held to highlight the risks of privatization to regional and rural communities. Locations and dates include: Mt Isa (6 July), Cloncurry (7 July), Hughenden (7 July), Charters Towers (8 July), Emerald (12 July), Barcaldine (13 July), Longreach (13 July) and Winton (14 July).

"The State Government is squeezing QR to concentrate resources on coal haulage, so it can proudly point to happy coal customers in any future negotiations with rail buyers," Mr Mackie said.

"Of course, Queensland graziers are not going to buy out a railway so they are forgotten about. Cattle farmers will struggle to find cost-effective ways of getting their animals to market. It will mean difficulties for farmers and increased prices for consumers."

Mr Mackie said cattle had been stranded earlier this month at Julia Creek because QR could not supply a train to take the livestock to meatworks near Rockhampton.

Rail is most economic for livestock haulage across medium to long distances.

The impact of fewer cattle trains is likely to be compounded by the State Government's axing of the fuel subsidy, further boosting road transport costs. It will also increase heavy road traffic on regional highways.

Mr Mackie said the Government was already favouring potential big business buyers for QR.

"What will happen to our graziers when big business knows it can make more money out of coal trains than cattle trains?"

"The hardworking farmers and families of regional Queensland are the last ones being considered in this hasty firesale," Mr Mackie said.

Regional forums will be held in July to highlight the risks of privatisation to Queensland communities.

**For further information or interviews,  
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