



Legislative Council

MEDIA RELEASE

8 October 2009

RAIL TAKEOVER WELCOMED

The resolution of the uncertainty surrounding the future of rail services in Tasmania has been welcomed, but not without some residual concern about aspects of the purchase by the Tasmanian Government.

North-West based MLC Ruth Forrest congratulated the Government on its decision to establish a business enterprise to operate the railway, which faced the real risk of permanent closure.

“The Government takeover of rail services is welcomed for many reasons, including the securing of the jobs of many Tasmanians and ensuring that rail will continue to play a major role in the State’s transport network and reduce the increasing stress on our roads,” Ms Forrest said.

“A particularly pleasing aspect of the purchase is the fact that the profitable Melba line on the West Coast will now be owned by the people of Tasmania, which should allow for increased investment in our rail network” Ms Forrest said.

While the Government’s preferred option was not to take over rail, nor own and operate the rail in the long term, Ms Forrest raised concerns that the proposed legislation allowed the rail infrastructure and business to be sold merely through the stroke of a pen by the Minister.

Ms Forrest successfully amended the Bill to ensure that any future sale has to be approved by the Parliament.

“This essential component of the State’s transport network has the potential to impact on all Tasmanians, who will pay the \$32 million for this asset, so it is only right that the Parliament approve the sale of such vital infrastructure if it is proposed in the future,” she said.

Ms Forrest said issues must also be addressed relating to the on-going maintenance of the rail infrastructure and capital expenditure to bring it up to the required standard.

“The need to fund and implement an on-going program of maintenance is crucial so the rail network is able to operate at peak efficiency into the future,” she said.

ends

FURTHER INFORMATION: Ruth Forrest MLC on 0419 879 524