

Our ref: PET 56981

10 March 2026

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 4296-25, lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 10 February 2026 about the use, volume and duration of train horns in residential rail corridors.

I am advised train horns are a critical safety control used by Queensland Rail to warn people in or near the rail corridor that a train is approaching or is about to move. Train horns are used at in-field whistle boards—which are placed trackside on approach to a level crossing—in emergency situations, or when train drivers witness potentially unsafe behaviour ahead of them.

The amount of time a train horn is sounded is considered to be a balance between the safety requirement and attempting to not disturb residents near the rail line. Instances of a train horn being sounded for a longer period could be due to visibility concerns, or activity occurring on or near the rail corridor that requires additional warning.

To be an effective warning device, train horns must be clearly distinguishable from other warning and alert tones (as do, for example, emergency services vehicles) and are designed to be heard at a suitable distance from the train, notwithstanding environmental distractions. While the tone and frequency of the train horn vary with different rollingstock, Queensland Rail sets minimum and maximum sound levels to ensure train horns are audible at a suitable distance from the train, while also managing noise impacts in developed areas.

All Queensland Rail level crossings are equipped with some form of safety protection such as signage, flashing lights and gates. Despite this, individuals continue to take risks, and every year there are near misses between trains and pedestrians or vehicles. In the 12-month period to 31 January 2026, more than 800 at risk interactions between pedestrians and vehicles have been reported on the Queensland Rail network. Sounding of the train horn when approaching level crossings helps to warn those in or near the rail corridor of the approaching train.

Rail Safety National Law (RSNL) requires an accredited rail transport operator to have and implement a safety management system that contains risk controls suitable for the scope and nature of their operations. Queensland Rail's safety management system prescribes how train horns are to be used as part of its risk control framework to comply with its obligations under RSNL.

While RSNL does not mandate specific applications for train horns, the use of train horns as part of a risk control framework is standard practice across the rail industry in Australia and internationally.

Additionally, Queensland Rail drivers undergo regular formal competency evaluations, as well as on-the-job monitoring and random ride-along assessments, to ensure they are operating the horn appropriately and in accordance with Queensland Rail's safety management system.

Queensland Rail remains committed to minimising rail noise impacts where practicable, however, ensuring the safety of employees, customers and the wider community is the number one priority. As such, there are no plans to alter the current protocols for train horn use at this time.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brent Mickelberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the word "Mickelberg".

BRENT MICKELBERG MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads