



Speech by
**Hon. BRIAN
LITTLEPROUD**

MEMBER FOR WESTERN DOWNS

Hansard 18 November 1998

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Hon. B. G. LITTLEPROUD (Western Downs—NPA) (12.33 p.m.): I am pleased to support the passage of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill through the House. It has already been acknowledged by the shadow Minister, the member for Gregory, that we intend to fully support this Bill. I noticed some young people in the public gallery earlier. They could be forgiven for thinking that Parliament is a place of everlasting opposition. However, that is not the case. In this instance the legislation is already working, but this Bill will make it work better.

In particular, I wish to speak about two pieces of legislation that will be amended by this Bill. In the overall scheme of things, this legislation addresses the role of the State Government to open up the resources of the State and to provide infrastructure. Having sat around the Cabinet table under two different Governments, I have gained a pretty good understanding of how complex forward planning can be. I am sure that, over many years, Governments of all political persuasions have tried to foresee the future. However, in spite of that, invariably the Government of the day comes up with something that requires amendment or a new issue that needs to be addressed at that time.

The Gladstone rail link was progressed some time ago under the Goss Government. That was because the limestone resource in Moreton Bay was being exhausted and QCL had to find a new source of lime. Environmental problems also had to be addressed. We had to be mindful also that a number of jobs were tied up in the industry in Brisbane. We had to make sure also that plenty of cement and concrete was available for the building industry in Queensland. The issue was complex and planning was undertaken by both the Department of Transport and the Department of Environment.

We have now reached the stage at which the previous planning needs to be refined. I am pleased to see that a decision was made to proceed with a rail link to take those huge quantities of lime to the port of Gladstone; that it was better to use a rail link than existing roads. Unfortunately, major planning always results in some people being disadvantaged. However, the departmental officers do a pretty good job of negotiating with those people who, from time to time, are disadvantaged because of progress. Getting the new Gladstone cement works up and running involved a lengthy process. These refinements will make it work even better, and I support them.

The other amendment to the Transport Infrastructure Act relates to the SUDAW project. Since I have been the member for Western Downs and, before that, the member for Condamine, I have been pushing for the mineral resources of the Darling Downs to be opened up. I observed the great benefits that flowed to central Queensland when the Bowen Basin was opened up. I was pleased when the former Borbidge Government called for expressions of interest to open up the Surat Basin. About 1 billion tonnes of proven coal reserves lie within the Chinchilla Shire alone.

We desperately need to diversify, instead of relying solely on agriculture, and create jobs in new industries. I am pleased to see that the Beattie Government is committed to providing jobs, jobs, jobs. Previously in this Chamber I have said that there are not many options in my area but that one of them is the development of coalmining. In recent months, following my visit to Kyoto, I felt a sense of trepidation in that I feared some of our coal reserves may lie unutilised. However, given the pace of technological developments, I am sure that we will be able to use our coal in a different way—for example, gasification of coal in power stations before it is burnt or even gasification underground.

Those sorts of innovations give me a bit more confidence. We have an enormous resource out there that we need to develop. It is important that we do the right things with respect to forward planning.

Where I have been able to do so, I have always helped SUDAW. For example, I have assisted it to find potential export markets for its coal. I think it is heartened by the new technology coming on stream. I know that it is looking at a number of options, including two or three different routes to Gladstone or Bundaberg. It was frustrated that its investigations were being impeded. I understand that at present it is prepared to spend about \$10m on the environmental impact assessment. It needs access to the various routes proposed in order to undertake that assessment and to assess any engineering problems. This piece of legislation will facilitate this project and benefit future projects also. I fully support that initiative.

I wish to speak about one other issue in relation to forward planning, namely, the cultural record Act. Both the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Mines and Energy—who is in the Chamber—would be aware of the looming problems in this area. In the mid eighties, with the very best of intentions, the then Government brought in the cultural record Act, because it wanted to make sure that we preserved the culture of the various people who have lived in Australia. However, that Act was put in place prior to Mabo and Wik. As the then Minister for Environment, I became aware of the shortcomings in the Act and, through the Premier's Department and the native title section, we were in the process of upgrading the cultural record Act. I appeal to the Minister for Transport to encourage his Cabinet colleagues to go ahead with that. At present all sorts of anomalies exist, and it is being misused—putting it kindly—by some people to the disadvantage of the overall populace of the State. We desperately need to work out some practices whereby we can still uphold the general principle of retaining our cultural heritage but at the same time make sure that people proposing major projects are not overly concerned.

I can recall going to a function down town one day with which lots of business people were involved. One person of American extraction—a nation that is all go and does not have a lot of finesse in terms of safeguards—was talking to me. He asked, "Would you have guessed that I have just spent an enormous amount of money going through a cultural record search on a corridor that already exists?" A power corridor was going into Gladstone and he was building a gas pipeline, but he had to pay for a search as well. He thought that that was over the top. I had to admit that it certainly was.

The Minister for Mines and Energy would know that up in the north-west of Queensland—I think it was in relation to the access of electricity to the Gunpowder site—once again the cultural record Act was causing all sorts of frustrations. I was trying to facilitate that as best I could in my portfolio. We, in fact, devised a new process of notification that was helping, but there is still a way to go. I urge the Government to back any efforts that come forward from the Premier's Department, the Department of Environment and Heritage or the Department of Natural Resources to retain the principle of this Act but make it workable so that all of Queensland can benefit from the vast resources that we have. It is part and parcel of our major forward planning for the future of Queensland. I commend the Bill to the House.
