



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 21 October 1998

MORETON BAY WATER TAXIS; MANSFIELD ALP BRANCH

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (7.23 p.m.): The Beattie Government's first Budget contained funding for a small but by no means insignificant transport initiative: the extension of the 50% pensioner and Seniors Card concessions to water taxi services in Moreton Bay. I am delighted that the Budget contained the funds to extend this concession scheme to commuter ferries, because it will directly improve the standard of living for a large number of my constituents who live in the Moreton Bay island communities.

It is an initiative that both I and the former member for Redlands, John Budd, campaigned on at the last election, and it is great news for the communities on North Stradbroke, Russell, Lamb, Macleay, Karragarra and Coochiemudlo Islands, who will benefit because water taxis are the main form of transportation to and from the mainland for these island residents. From 1 January 1999, pensioners and seniors using the water taxi service of Moreton Bay will have their transport costs halved. This effectively allows pensioners and seniors living in the island communities to make twice as many trips to the mainland as their budget currently allows, opening up more opportunities to access cheaper shopping and the range of services provided on the mainland. This 50% concession will also have a positive impact on the social lives of many of my island constituents, because now many island residents will be able to enjoy social activities available on the mainland, which they had been denied in the past because of the prohibitive cost of frequent island-to-mainland trips.

The Beattie Government is effectively halving the cost of a water taxi trip to the mainland for the majority of Moreton Bay island residents. The decision to extend the concession scheme to the water taxi service does not represent special treatment for the island communities. In fact, at long last it brings water taxi services into line with the concessions offered to pensioners and Seniors Card holders on other forms of public transport services. I have always argued that extending the concession scheme to water taxis and other commuter ferries in Moreton Bay was a simple matter of equity. It was just not fair that people living in the island communities were being denied public transport concessions simply because their only form of public transport was the water taxi. Mainland public transport services, such as buses and trains, provide seniors and pensioners with 50% concessions. As the member representing the people living on the islands of Moreton Bay, I consistently argued that it was only equitable that this Government service be extended to the main form of public transport for those people living on those islands. The 50% concession on water taxis will be available to anybody holding a Seniors Card issued by the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, a pensioner concession card issued by the Department of Social Security or Department of Veterans Affairs, or a repatriation gold card issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The start-up date has been set for 1 January 1999, because time is required to negotiate a funding arrangement between the ferry or water taxi operators and the Queensland Department of Transport. The negotiations are expected to result in five-year service contracts being entered into between the ferry and water taxi operators and Queensland Transport. These contracts will provide greater certainty and allow longer-term planning while also ensuring that

ferry services are integrated into the public transport system and that there is better coordination with other public transport services, such as buses and trains.

The extension of the pensioner concessions for water taxis in the Moreton Bay area is a Government initiative that has been warmly welcomed by my constituents. It is another example of the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to supporting local communities and ensuring that all Queenslanders, regardless of where they live, can afford to access the public transport services necessary to live an active social and community life.

In the last minute available to me, I would like to make mention of the wonderful people in the Mansfield electorate who tonight are sitting above us in the gallery. I would like to welcome them all. They are fine members of the Australian Labor Party. I would like to thank them most especially for working so hard to see a fine member for Mansfield elected. Without this member, Labor would not be on this side of the House. So I thank very much those members of the Mansfield ALP. I assure them that their hard work has elected a marvellous member for the seat of Mansfield.
