



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS, MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (12 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill before the House that was introduced by my colleague the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I will address a few issues in relation to the Bill. The first issue is the provision of the power to remove vehicles and animals that are causing an obstruction on the State's roads. Until now, that power has been able to be exercised only by officers of the Queensland Police Service. Considerable resources are wasted and time is frequently used on removal tasks that could be used by those police officers in lowering the road toll—as the member for Gregory indicated—and in doing other more important things that they are specifically trained to do.

As an aside, that brings me to the general issue of the delineation problems in policing laws in this State. My electorate is an electorate situated on Moreton Bay, where transport regulations are enforced generally by the Water Police. Environmental legislation is enforced by Department of Environment officers. The Brisbane City Council enforces collection of shellfish laws. The Department of Primary Industries enforces fisheries laws. That really is quite silly. The more we can do to standardise enforcement the better. At least, if we need to have separate enforcement officers, other enforcement officers should be given ancillary powers. That is very important.

I support strongly the Minister's initiative in seeking to extend the removal powers to local government. That is the body that usually has local knowledge that would make them aware of the fact that there is a cause for removing a vehicle or an animal that is obstructing a road. It might be thought that such obstructions are merely an eyesore, but they are very much a safety issue. In many cases, people could be injured. For example, kids could walk out from behind derelict vehicles. A vehicle might have been on a road for a lengthy period and everyone may have assumed that it is sitting there for a reason when, in fact, it is sitting there for no reason. A kid could walk out from behind that vehicle and be killed. It is very important to give those powers to local governments. I am sure that they will exercise them responsibly. I understand that guidelines will be provided to them covering those issues, such as notifying the local police of the removal of the obstruction.

One of the major sources of complaint that I receive in relation to urban issues is the parking of long vehicles in urban streets. It is a constant source of irritation to people who have a nice amenity outside their house. They like to look out and see the lawn and across the road. They do not like having a very long vehicle parked outside their house or across the road creating an eyesore, making a nuisance and blocking up what is a small street. Some time ago the State Government amended the legislation to allow local governments to exercise a power in that regard. I can understand why it did that, because it is local governments that have local knowledge and which exercise parking regulations. The problem is that local governments have not really addressed that issue. It is important that local governments have that power because what is perhaps acceptable in the shadow Minister's electorate, for example, may not be acceptable in mine. There may be some parts of Queensland where one could park a long vehicle in a residential street and no-one would care, but in my electorate people do care. I am very disappointed that local governments have not progressed further with their efforts to address the issue of long vehicles being parked in residential streets. If that issue is not addressed by local governments soon, the State Government may have to revisit it in the interests of the people of Queensland.

Mr Littleproud: The irregular working hours of long-distance drivers cause the problem.

Mr LUCAS: That is right. As the member points out, it is a problem. What might be acceptable in the member's electorate is not acceptable in mine. Further, it is a responsibility of the transport operators. They should be supplying their workers with proper yards in which to park their vehicles. It is not the poor truckies' fault. We have to resolve that problem.

I turn now to the use of bicycles on footpaths. Some time ago, legislation was amended to allow bicycles to be used on footpaths. I have no difficulty with that at all. I am the parent of three young cyclists and a child sits on the back seat of my bike when we go for a ride. I can understand that, for very important safety reasons, everyone should be allowed to ride on footpaths. However, a problem arises when cyclists reach shopping centre areas. My electorate has a higher proportion than average of older people. A real problem is created in Wynnum shopping centres when irresponsible people choose to ride their bikes in the shopping area where they have to dodge around old people. I have seen people struck by bicycles. That is a real concern to me. More action needs to be taken in that regard. I would argue that that is primarily the domain of local governments, because they can determine in what areas cyclists should ride and in what areas they should not. That issue is becoming a major problem. If a little kid runs into an old lady and then rides off, to whom will that old lady look to pay her medical bills if, because she has frail bones, her hip has been broken? It is quite a common problem and one that needs addressing. I go to the Gold Coast for my Christmas holidays. I enjoy riding up to the Tugun newsagency to get the morning paper. That area has a very clear system: cyclists can ride along the footpath until they reach the shopping centre where there are signs stating that cyclists must dismount at that point. Cyclists hop off their bikes there or ride on the road from that point. That is the sort of measure that is needed everywhere to encourage the safe use of bicycles. Pedestrian use of paths must be paramount and such a measure encourages respect for the rights of pedestrians.

The Bill contains a number of amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act. One such amendment allows investigations for new rail corridors to be carried out. That power will give new and existing railway managers access to land to investigate the feasibility of improving the rail network. A few days ago, when I was reading an article from the library about the Wilbur Smith plan—the plan that gave us that monstrosity of a freeway outside this place and routed all traffic from the north side and the south side through the city instead of around the city—I was shocked to read what was said about rail. It was suggested that the Cleveland line ought to have been closed. How would people in my electorate or in the electorate of the members for Redlands, Cleveland and Capalaba have been affected if we had adopted that sort of warped logic? No doubt, the corridor would have been sold.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr LUCAS: The member for Logan makes a very good point. I will refer to that shortly.

It is very important that we make decisions now about transport corridors. People tend to get upset when suddenly a decision is made to give them a transport corridor, when in the past they have held the view that it is unlikely that there would be one there. If we make such plans early so we can say, "This is the transport corridor; this is what you can expect in the future", then people who acquire land in the area cannot say that they have been misled. That is very important, because this is a fast-growing State. The south-east corner of Queensland will become more and more populous as time goes by. It is very important to take steps now to have a public transport system that can adequately service our future needs.

The member for Logan mentioned areas near his electorate. I do not think the Beaudesert line is being used any more. I think that, when the meatworks closed, it was mothballed. It is very important to protect that corridor because the population in that area is growing as more and more development occurs. I confidently predict that one day that line will be used as part of the urban rail network.

Mr Paff: Hear, hear!

Mr LUCAS: The member for Ipswich West's electorate is also an area that is developing very quickly. We need to consider the preservation of those rail corridors, so I certainly support that provision in the Bill.

Mr Mickel: The Logan council isn't helping much.

Mr LUCAS: I cannot comment on the Logan council. I will have to ask the member for Logan to mention that in his contribution. Certainly, it is a joint effort between State and local governments, and the Federal Government if we could get this Federal Government to put any money into it, which I doubt very much.

I want to comment briefly on an excellent project by the Queensland Council of Social Services. It is undertaking a study of the transport options in Wynnum, which has an older than usual population. Only very recently, I wrote to the Transport Minister about the fact that my local area has only one disabled taxi. Wynnum Cabs is actually licensed separately to the rest of Brisbane. I am very pleased that that is the case, because we consider ourselves to be a little bit different from the rest of Brisbane.

Mr Bredhauer: So do most Queenslanders.

Mr LUCAS: It is a great privilege and an honour to represent my electorate because the people of my electorate are that little bit different. My electorate is more like a small provincial city.

Mr Bredhauer: You are a very special part of Brisbane.

Mr LUCAS: We are. The member for Sunnybank is an old boy of Wynnum Central State School and a very proud product of that school. I might add that Mr Speaker's good wife, Diane, is a former Lota resident. So there is a lot of esteemed company in my local area. However, there is a problem with having only one disabled taxi. Wynnum Hospital is not particularly well suited to access by public transport. So I ask the Minister to look into that matter.

Finally, I want to speak briefly about an issue that is very, very important to the economic development of south-east Queensland and, indeed, the rest of the State, and that is the port of Brisbane. In the time that I have worked with the Minister on his legislation committee, I have not been anything but impressed by his level of commitment to transport issues, and, indeed, his policy commitment. The Minister really does have a very firm grasp of the policy issues of his portfolio. I have also been very impressed, as the shadow Minister indicated previously, by the very high calibre of people who work for the Minister in his department. That certainly gives me great confidence that that aspect of the infrastructure of this State is in very good hands.

I was very pleased to be able to talk to the Main Roads Department official about some local transport issues, such as Lytton Road and the port road. Under the latest Roads Implementation Plan, a number of works are being undertaken on Lytton Road which will upgrade its safety substantially. However, that is not the end of it; we need more. If we are going to have a world-class port, we need a port road and we need that as soon as possible. It never ceased to amaze me that the Federal Liberal/National Government was prepared to spend millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money and then take millions and millions of dollars from stevedores and intervene politically to try to sort out, in its view, the waterside workers' dispute and attempt to smash the Maritime Union of Australia. The Federal Government was very interested in that sort of port/waterfront reform but it could not give two hoots about real port/waterfront reform, which is increasing access to the port by having a proper road accessing the port from the Gateway Arterial road.

The Federal Government is not interested in the real issues; it is interested only in ideological purges and drives. It is about time the Federal Government realised that it had some responsibility for putting in the money for the port road so that we can get our cargo shipped in and out of the south-east corner of the State efficiently and expeditiously. In common with any other method of multimodal transport, the port is as slow as its largest bottleneck, and at the moment the port road is a bottleneck and it needs to be fixed. Instead of having Peter Reith going on ideological crazes and benders, it is about time the Federal Government put its money where its mouth is and actually did something that might increase the economic wealth of this State.

In conclusion, I commend the Minister on this legislation. I look forward to his very long and distinguished tenure in this portfolio. So far, from what I have seen, I have certainly been very impressed. I think that we will continue to see that good work.