



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (2.45 p.m.): I have much pleasure rising to speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill. Before addressing aspects of the Bill, I inform the House that last Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending on behalf of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads the Queensland Road Transport Association annual dinner and awards night. The QRTA is the pre-eminent transport industry body in Queensland. Its record reflects that it is willing to work with all stakeholders, including Government, in achieving better business but, more importantly, safer business. I have had discussions with their executive director, Peter Garske, on the major trouble area in my electorate, the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. I must say that I was pleasantly surprised about the QRTA's willingness to examine options and come up with some long-term strategies. It understands that it needs to consider the community's needs.

The awards night highlighted the achievements of the industry and some of its participants. We often hear of the negative aspects of the road transport industry through reports of accidents and unsafe practices. However, we do not see promoted the vast majority of safe and efficient practices of those involved in the trucking industry. To me the industry has always given the impression of being a male bastion. To my pleasant surprise, the industry is far from being such a bastion.

Of the six awards given on Saturday night, three of them were presented to women. To me that highlights the progressive nature of the industry. Ray Taylor, President of the QRTA, and his board and members should be extremely proud of their achievements. The professional driver award was awarded to two gentlemen. For that award, the assessment panel nominates the nominees on the following criteria. The driver must have continuously and actively engaged as a professional driver for a minimum of 10 years, driven in excess of one million kilometres, not been involved through their own fault in any road accidents during the past 10 years, not committed any serious violation of the Traffic Acts or administrative regulations of the country, and must through their attitude and willingness to perform to the highest standards be an ambassador for the industry. As an added motivation, winners of those awards will automatically receive nomination for the Road Transport Forum's national driver of the year award. The two winners of that award were Reginald Laurie of Taylors Removals of Toowoomba and Tony Brown of TL Brown Transport.

Other awards presented on the evening included trainee of the year awards, which were granted to transport industry trainees who were deemed to have achieved outstanding results and exhibited leadership and management qualities along with initiative, decisiveness and ability to assist the group. Traineeships are aimed primarily at training and encouraging young people to be involved and to make a career in the transport and distribution industry. Each of the trainees is assessed and marked throughout the year in every aspect of their training with external input coming from workplace and industry trainees. This year, 102 trainees were inducted into road transport training and 153 into warehousing through the industry's own provider, QRTA Transport Training Services. Traineeships provide valuable industry skills and knowledge and enable the industry to assess skilled employees. Traineeships are developing into one of the major resource bases for recruitment into the transport industry. Trainee of the year for warehousing was Brigita Kaurinovic. She is employed by IAMA Queensland Pty Ltd, which operates out of Acacia Ridge. The other winner was Matthew Griffiths who is

employed by Bribie Island Express. He is almost fully occupied as an on forwarder for First Express Couriers.

Another award was the Industry Safety— Queensland Transport Award, which was presented by Ray Rawlings from the department. It is awarded annually to a fleet or individual who demonstrates leadership in safety in the transport industry. The award carries with it as a prize from Queensland Transport a set of newly developed personalised numberplates incorporating the company's name along with the wording "Industry Safety Award". This award is given to an individual or fleet operator with a record of significant contribution to road safety. The award recognises a demonstration of leadership in influencing fellow drivers, employees and/or operators to improve and maintain standards of safety; specific initiatives being undertaken to improve and maintain road transport safety; an attitude which accepts that safety, in particular road safety, is a priority and cannot be compromised in the interests of improved operational efficiency; encouragement of road safety by the introduction of accredited training and an industry accreditation program; the raising of awareness of the need to improve driver health, driver training, vehicle maintenance and management; an exemplary record in relation to compliance with road law demonstrated by the elapse of a lengthy period since any without fault accident; and a demonstrated respect for the community and other road users.

The winner of that award was BHP Transport. It was accepted by Leigh Bell Lee, who is one of the operations managers of BHP Transport and who, obviously, just happens to be a woman. BHP Transport relies almost totally on subcontractors for its operations. So that is a pretty good news story about industry safety and subcontractors.

The final award was the Management Excellence Award, which had been structured as a monetary grant to enable the winner to enhance their management performance by encouraging participation in skills extension activities, such as further education, training or study tours. The choice of prize is left up to the individual winner. However, in that regard they are assisted by sponsorship from Volvo Truck and Bus of \$2,000. The intent of this award is to motivate and assist current industry managers to aspire to world best standards and the pursuit of best practice. The winner of that award in 1997, Graham Buchner, used his prize to assist in the upgrade of his depot computer.

This year's winner was Judy Kirchner Bundaberg of Richers Transport of Bundaberg. Judy has been in the transport industry since 1989, when she was first employed as manager for Simpson's Transport in Bundaberg. Her successful management of this business continued for six years when the company was purchased by Richers Transport of Maryborough. Judy then became the Bundaberg branch manager of Richers Transport. The management of Richers recognised quickly Judy's ability. She leads by example, working long hours and dispenses a firm but fair approach, which gains the utmost respect from all staff members.

That awards ceremony showed to me the progressive nature of the QRTA especially, as I said, with three of the six major awards being collected by women. Although some people within the industry are less than perfect, they tend not to be part of the QRTA, which goes to great lengths to ensure that its members reach standards that the Government, the community and the industry expect.

The road transport industry is the heart and soul of Australia. It will always be part of the fabric of society. It is great to see organisations ensuring that safety concerns are paramount. I look forward to continuing to work with and support the QRTA, especially in relation to my pet issue, the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road.

The Bill contains a number of amendments to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, which are designed to support the integrity of the taxi service. These amendments are designed to protect taxi operators from competition from unlicensed operators. This protection is necessary to ensure the ongoing provision of efficient taxi services in Queensland.

In 1996, a major survey was conducted by the consultancy firm AGB McNair to measure customer satisfaction with Queensland taxi services. This survey was preceded by a similar survey in 1994. I understand that that is to be followed up by another survey this year. The 1996 survey found that 64% of all Queensland residents use taxis annually and that 45% of Queenslanders used taxis regularly—and I am one of those 45%. Seventy-nine per cent of the surveyed taxi users rated the ease of catching taxis as good. Queensland taxi services were rated highly across a band of performance criteria. According to the 1996 survey, most taxi users were satisfied with the industry in this State.

Queensland residents benefit from an efficient and reliable taxi service. The provision of a high-standard taxi service also reflects well upon the State to its valued business and recreational visitors. Recently, it was reported in the national media that a Sydney taxidriver—and I am sure that we all have had an experience with Sydney taxidrivers—refused to take a visiting overseas Olympic official into the Sydney city heart and instead advised the official to catch a train. That incident was very embarrassing to the Sydney Olympics organisers and to the Government and the people of New South Wales. It is very important that the Queensland Government acts to prevent similar incidents. This Government must ensure that our State's high-quality taxi services are maintained and improved upon. The

recommended amendments will ensure that the ongoing delivery of good taxi services will protect the integrity of our regulated taxi service scheme.

To avoid possible degradation of the high quality of the State's taxi services, it is imperative to close down quickly a loophole in the governing Act. This loophole has been exploited by some charter bus operators and has allowed them to operate in a way substantially like taxis without having to fulfil the usual requirements imposed upon taxi service operators under the Act. These charter bus operators have been providing services in direct competition with taxi operators but, unlike taxi operators, they can choose to work at only the profitable times or on only the profitable routes. Closing this loophole will ensure that the regulated taxi scheme is not undermined.

The intent of the current legislation is to maintain and promote efficient taxi services by providing market entry restrictions through the imposition of taxi service licence requirements. In return for restricted competition, taxi operators are required to meet certain obligations with respect to the provision of taxi services. For example, they must provide a service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As a consequence, licensed taxi operators do not have the luxury of choosing to service only the profitable hours or trips. In contrast, those charter bus operators who have been providing taxi-like services, particularly in Cairns, have been able to pick and choose what fares they will service. Those particular amendments that affect the definition of a taxi service are designed to support the intent of the current legislation with regard to restricted market entry. An effect of the amendments is that operators of charter buses will not be able to provide taxi-like services unless they hold appropriate taxi service licences.

I would like to take a lead from the Deputy Speaker and make the House aware—and the Minister knows this—that one of the biggest concerns in my electorate is the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road/Kessels Road.

Ms Spence: Hear, hear!

Mr REEVES: I am sure that the member for Mount Gravatt will agree with me.

Ms Spence: The biggest issue on the south side.

Mr REEVES: It is the biggest issue on the south side. In the lead-up to the Federal election, coalition politicians, especially Federal coalition politicians, tried to exploit this issue and, for want of a better word, pass the buck to get the declassification of the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. All that the declassification will achieve will be that we will have to spend the money on maintaining the Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road/Kessels Road corridor. We need to be a bit more strategic and work with the transport operators and the other users of the road and provide some incentives to get the trucks off Kessels Road and Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and encourage them to use the southern bypass, because that is what it was built for. Unfortunately, those opposite, or friends of those opposite, just want to turn the issue into a political football and not look for some long-term strategies. I have been pleasantly surprised by the cooperation of many officers of the Departments of Transport and Main Roads who are looking at various options. Hopefully in the new year we will be able to present some to the Minister so that we can have some real long-term strategies to solve the major problem. As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy said, Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and Kessels Road is the major problem on the south side. I commend this Bill to the House.
