



Speech by

**Mr S. SANTORO**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Hansard 16 September 1998

**TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr SANTORO** (Clayfield—LP) (12.26 p.m.): I appreciate very much this opportunity to make a contribution in this debate because it provides me with a chance to raise several transport issues that are of concern to my constituents. Obviously, these issues are related to road and rail. The first issue that I would like to raise directly with the Minister—and I have corresponded with him about this matter and I will refer to correspondence later on—is the issue of the City/Valley bypass. I reiterate the concerns of my constituents in relation to this proposed bypass. Right from the outset, I stress that I believe that the people who have made representations to me are very reasonable people. They are in favour of progress and would like to see transport solutions advanced to difficult transport problems. However, they have told me, and I believe also, that the process that has been followed by the Brisbane City Council in relation to this project is not a very good one.

As I have stated previously in this place and outside, the first that my constituents knew of this project was when they received an initial flyer from the Brisbane City Council consultants. Basically, in that flyer the consultants said, "Look, this is it. You have two options that the city council is putting before you for your consideration. You should let us know which one you support, as residents and as business people within the way of the proposed route or in the vicinity of the proposed route." Obviously, this flyer generated much alarm and many people made contact with me. All of the concerns that I have expressed in this place previously in relation to this matter still stand very much so.

When it comes to this project, the community is not going to go away. They are agitating and organising in relation to it. I intend to support them in a constructive manner in terms of helping them achieve representative clout before the

Minister in this place. I believe it is terribly important that, with infrastructure of the size that is being discussed and considered in relation to this City/Valley bypass, consultation with those who are likely to be mostly affected should be as extensive as possible.

I have sought to receive briefings from the Minister's senior officers. On 4 September, I wrote to the Minister and most respectfully but very strongly recommended that he ask his relevant senior planning officers within the Department of Main Roads to take very careful note of the concerns that I expressed on behalf of my constituents in a fairly extensive speech that I made in this place some time ago. I also asked if the Minister would be kind enough to arrange for me to be briefed by the relevant project manager within his department and for regular subsequent briefings so that as the local member of Parliament I could be kept abreast of concerns.

**Mr Bredhauer:** It is not our project; it is a city council project.

**Mr SANTORO:** I appreciate that the Minister does not have lead agency role in relation to that project.

**Mr Bredhauer:** No, it's not that we do have lead agency role. It's not our project; it's the city council's project.

**Mr SANTORO:** I do not want this series of interjections to develop into a smart or picky exchange. The Minister knows that unless the Brisbane City Council receives the cooperation of and various approvals from the department, the project will not happen. I also respectfully suggest to the Minister that if the project is to proceed, it will require funding from the State Government. It is now way past the embryonic stage and, although it is a project of the city council, the Department of Transport and Main Roads is very much involved in the process. I know that

because, prior to the change of Government, the then Minister arranged an initial and very extensive briefing, which indicated clearly to me that the department was very heavily involved in consulting with the Brisbane City Council. Obviously, we in this place and the department have some influence on the way that the Brisbane City Council progresses that particular project. Of course, one of the reasons that we have a lot of influence is the necessity for funding. The city council is not capable of providing all of the funding for the project. As I have stated previously, there are only two ways that the city council can complete the project: either by raising rates and funding it from the ratepayers' base from which it draws funds or by getting funds from other authorities, including the Federal and the State Governments.

I inform the Minister that on Sunday I attended a rally at Victoria Park. I support the statements that were made by the honourable member for Gregory, who said that every care must be taken to preserve the pristine quality of that park, which is very much a lung for the City of Brisbane. Not many cities in the world have such extensive parks in the middle of the city. It provides many recreational and environmental amenities for the citizens of Brisbane and I support totally the remarks made by the shadow Minister for Transport.

On Sunday in Victoria Park, one of the leaders of the action group approached me and asked me whether or not the previous Minister for Transport and Main Roads had made a funding commitment to that particular project. I mention this in a constructive manner. She mentioned to me that the Premier had stated that the former Minister for Transport had made a funding commitment. I told her that I did not believe that that was the case because, as a local member who would be affected by such a commitment, I would have been consulted and I would have heard discussion of the commitment in Cabinet. Given the absence of any consultation or discussion in Cabinet, I checked with the shadow Minister, the then Minister. He informed me that no funding guarantee had been given as allegedly stated by the Premier, the member for Brisbane Central. I place that alleged statement by the Premier on the record. Perhaps the Minister can give some indication of where his Government stands in terms of funding, given that the record clearly shows that the Goss Labor Government committed approximately \$35m to the project when it was floated several years ago by the then Transport Minister. Again I say to the Minister that I intend to be constructive in the way that I make representations about this issue. Everybody in Brisbane would agree that the problems of traffic congestion and the carriage of dangerous goods through the Valley and the inner city need to be addressed. However, the interests of my constituents and others need to be addressed seriously. I ask the Minister to help

me, in a bipartisan manner, to look after their concerns.

Another major issue is the Leckie Road connection. The Minister may be aware that on 4 August in this place I raised the issue of the disposal of land owned by the Department of Transport and Main Roads and other Government-owned land in what is euphemistically described as the Leckie Road connection. Of course the Minister will appreciate that, at my urging and as a result of an election promise that the coalition made, the previous Minister decided to sell the Leckie Road connection. For-sale signs went up and, apparently, approximately five offers have been made for those properties. My constituents became concerned when the signs were taken down. When I asked departmental officers about that, they informed me that the offers were now before the Minister and that he had to decide whether or not those properties were to be disposed of, obviously at the highest price offered. On 4 August I asked the Minister whether he would expedite his decision and thereby provide some assurance to my constituents that the sale of the land is going ahead. We appreciate that the process must not occur with unreasonable haste because we do not want to flood the local market with the 60 or so properties in question. Nevertheless, my constituents require the Minister to take some action. The sale of those properties will certainly reaffirm the new Government's attitude towards the decision of the previous Government to sell those properties. I ask the Minister to be kind enough to address that issue in his reply.

Briefly, I wish to commend the process that is under way to resolve the problem of the Nundah bottleneck. An enormous amount of good liaison and consultation is occurring between the Minister's department and constituents, whether they be residents, business owners or other interest groups such as local schools. I commend the department and particularly the senior officers who are involved in the project for the way that they are progressing the solution to a problem that has dogged that part of Brisbane for such a long time. While recognising the efforts of departmental officers, I would say that with all of the issues that I have raised and that I intend to raise during the time remaining, when the Goss Government was in power, when the coalition was in power and since the change of Government the staff of the Department of Transport and Main Roads have acted very courteously and professionally. I appreciate their willingness to work in a bipartisan manner to provide feedback to resolve specific issues that are of concern to individuals and interest groups within my electorate.

I listened with great interest to the contributions of the honourable members for Chermside and Nudgee, and what they had to

say about the airport rail link. It has strong public support. I have supported it ever since becoming aware of the existence of the transport corridor that has been preserved by successive Governments. Any rail link to the airport should be constructed along the transport corridor that already runs along the very busy east-west arterial road that links most of Brisbane to the airport. That transport corridor has been preserved for a very good reason: traffic-wise it was already a very busy area and was relatively removed from heavily populated residential areas.

The honourable member for Nudgee mentioned that a noise barrier has already been erected along that transport corridor. I assure him that the erection of that noise barrier had nothing to do with the way in which the rail link issue was being progressed. It was erected after I received representations from constituents and I in turn made representations on their behalf in relation to their concerns about people travelling in cars along that road who were throwing various objects over what was then a very low rail and into people's backyards. That was placing residents, in particular the young children who play in those backyards, at grave risk. It was as a result of those representations that Main Roads agreed to erect that barrier. I place on record that, on behalf of my constituents, I am grateful for the very speedy resolution of that dangerous situation.

I support the rail link to the airport being constructed along the Schulz Canal transportation corridor as opposed to along the Eagle Junction-Pinkenba branch rail line. Any further rail traffic along that branch line would pass right through very densely populated areas of my electorate. The branch line was never really meant to provide a link to the airport, as shown by the decision of successive Governments to preserve a transport corridor along the Schulz Canal route.

The project will provide many benefits not only for those arriving at and departing from the airport. Obviously, airport workers also will benefit from that facility, as will those meeting and farewelling people at the airport. Anybody else who has reason to travel towards the airport, for example, for tourist and recreation reasons, will also benefit. The member for Nudgee mentioned the utilisation of this facility. I am told that approximately 12% of all trips to and from the airport will be conducted on that rail link if and when it comes about. I hope that the project proves economically viable for the private sector consortium, because a rail link to the airport is an overdue facility. Brisbane is one of the few major cities in the world that does not have a rail link from the airport to the centre of the city and beyond. This is a very positive move and one that has been supported by Governments of all political colours.

There will also be other advantages. For example, the project will reduce the number of road trips to and from the airport and lead to many other road user benefits, such as infrastructure cost savings, reduced congestion, less pollution and fewer accidents. All of those beneficial impacts have been mentioned within the impact assessment study. There will be greater patronage for Queensland Rail. That in itself will bring about benefits through the financial returns that will accrue to the Government.

I understand that much research has been conducted into the visual quality of the environment and any impact as a result of the construction of the rail link. Any sensitive areas have been and will continue to be identified. The study has identified visual impacts on, for example, parklands and residential areas where the track is within view. I have looked at the results of the impact study. Again, that impact study found that in relation to the hydrology of the Schulz Canal no deviations or modifications of existing waterways are either necessary or proposed. Over the past 20 or 30 years there have been enormous changes to that waterway as a result of dredging and alterations. Very little of its original hydrology remains. I suspect that these days hydrological considerations are not much of a concern for that area.

In relation to flora and fauna, prior to the development of the airport and the associated extensive clearing activities, the area of the BARL route between the existing north coast rail line near Toombul and the domestic and international terminals was largely dominated by wetlands and would have contained a wide range of native species. However, those native species have disappeared from that area and, again, the BARL is likely to have minimal ecological or water quality significance. Similarly, air quality will not be impacted significantly by the proposed project. I have been informed that works to mitigate the impacts on ground water, particularly during the construction phase of the project, will be undertaken.

I wish to make two final points about the rail link. I have been assured that the impact on Kalinga Park will be absolutely minimal. I have been assured about that from day one, and I will keep a very vigilant eye on that. There are some other issues in relation to a couple of resumptions that are in the process of being resolved. I undertake to continue to make representations on behalf of my constituents in relation to their concerns. I strongly support the project. It should receive bipartisan support. I hope that it comes to fruition, because it will be a great infrastructure acquisition for the City of Brisbane and something that will assist Brisbane tremendously in its development in the year 2000 and beyond.