



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 30 July 1998

MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (3.23 p.m.): I rise to move an amendment to the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise. I move—

"That all words after the word 'Nicklin' be deleted."

The amendment of the member for Surfers Paradise was—

"... and recognises the commitments given by the Premier to the member for Nicklin and requires the resignation of the Premier and his Government if these commitments are not honoured in full."

I think we have to ask ourselves who in this debate is fair dinkum, because there is no doubt that the only reason why the member for Surfers Paradise has moved that amendment is so that he can come in here week after week, playing politics, scoring cheap political points, following his assessment or his assertion that the commitments made to the member for Nicklin may or may not have been delivered on by this Government. The people who are to judge whether the commitments given to the member for Nicklin are delivered or not will be the member for Nicklin and the people of Queensland, not the member for Surfers Paradise with his jaundiced view. We must remember that the member for Surfers Paradise is the member who, prior to the 1995 election, signed a contract with the people of Queensland and said, "If we don't honour our contract, throw us out." The people of Queensland spoke and threw out the coalition Government and that is why those opposites find themselves on the other side of the House. This Government will allow itself to be judged on its performance and its commitment to the member for Nicklin. Our judges will be the member for Nicklin and the people of Queensland.

I want to refer to a couple of issues that were raised earlier today in this debate. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to make a contribution to the debate on this motion of confidence in the first Beattie Government. It is with great pride that I stand here today as the Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads. I am the first Minister with portfolio representing the electorate of Cook. The member for Gregory pointed out the nature of his electorate. In many respects his electorate and mine are similar in size and in the industries that they contain.

I thank the people of the electorate of Cook for the confidence that they have shown in me in the 1998 State election. Indeed, I was honoured to receive an increased majority in my seat and to have seen the strength of the support that emerged from across the electorate. It is curious that in the 1998 election, when many sitting members in rural or regional parts of Queensland suffered swings away from them, in the Cook electorate there was a swing to me in virtually every one of my 50-odd booths. I can assure the people of the Cook electorate that their confidence will continue to be justified by the hard work that I put in on their behalf.

The member for Gregory referred to the issue of Briztram. I want to comment on this matter because I did describe Briztram as old technology. I did not say it was 19th century technology. If it has been reported that I said that, I inform the House that that is incorrect. What I said was that it was 1950s technology. The Briztram proposal was predicated on 1950s technology and it was designed to use the old-style trams. It even anticipated refurbishing some of the old trams as part of the Briztram project. It also anticipated using standard gauge line. It would have brought back to the City of Brisbane

and the south-east corner of Queensland all of the old traffic congestion problems that were part of the reason for us doing away with our tram services all those years ago.

The Labor Government has committed itself to a modern light rail service using the latest technology. We will not go back to the old-style technology. We will not be seeking to turn the clock back. The Briztram project was not a project that emanated from the Transport Department. It emanated from the 15th floor of the Executive Building when the member for Surfers Paradise was Premier. It was submitted over and above some other projects which would have been given a higher priority by the Transport Department or the Main Roads Department for Federation Funding. It was an election stunt. It was a pre-election gimmick—no more and no less. It was done without consultation with the Brisbane City Council.

There has been criticism in this House today of Lord Mayor Jim Soorley. The only reason why Jim Soorley criticised the project was because the Premier of the day did not have the decency to talk to him about it before he announced it publicly. We support a role for light rail but it has to be integrated with all our other public transport modes. The Integrated Regional Transport Plan—and the member for Gregory knows this—anticipated that a light rail service would be introduced in the south-east corner to service the needs of the City of Brisbane in the year 2003 or 2004. By using it as an election—

Mr Johnson: Are you saying it's not integrated public transport? You are using planners within the department. You know full well that they would have done that properly and professionally.

Mr BREDHAUER: Just to give the honourable member an example of the problems with his proposal and how it would not be integrated, I point out that Briztram was based on standard gauge rail. As a former Minister for Transport and Main Roads, the member should know that the heavy rail track in Queensland is narrow gauge. Therefore, we cannot have light rail vehicles sharing the same corridors as heavy rail.

Mr Johnson: Never had that intention.

Mr BREDHAUER: But the member should have. That is the whole point. If the honourable member had thought the process through, he would have organised it so that it could be integrated. Under a fully integrated light rail service, we could have a situation in which people could get on a light rail service on the Gold Coast and, without having to change trains, be brought into the centre of the city or taken out to New Farm or Teneriffe. It could use the same corridor as heavy rail, and there is no reason why it should not. If it was properly planned and implemented, it would be able to coordinate with the heavy rail network.

The busway network, about which the honourable member spoke in such a complimentary fashion, was never designed to accommodate Briztram. Since I have been the relevant Minister, we have modified the design of the busways so that they can accommodate light rail. In that way we can actually have busways and light rail sharing corridors. That would have been a sensible planning approach for the member to have adopted to this project. If the former Minister had not used Briztram as an election stunt, he would have got these things ticked off before he announced the project; he would have sorted out the problems in South Brisbane and Boundary Street at West End, but he did not. He rushed at it like a bull at a gate. It is not an integrated process.

We will get it right. We will take out the bugs that the former Minister left in it. We will make sure that the planning process enables us to fully integrate public transport systems. We will make sure that the busways help to relieve traffic congestion in the city. The city council is talking about the city/valley bypass, which will help to reduce traffic congestion in the process. Then we can use light rail as an effective people mover for the inner-city area. It will be a system that takes us forward into the next century and not backwards into the 1950s, which is what Briztram is all about.

I make a plea to the Prime Minister. There is a story in today's Courier-Mail—and it is not actually sourced to the Prime Minister—suggesting that the Prime Minister will not allocate the \$65m to our light rail project or other integrated public transport projects in Brisbane. I make a very strong appeal to the Prime Minister to reconsider that if that is in fact his view. It might be a cheap political point to score against a new Labor Government in Brisbane, but the people who will suffer as a result of that are not us. The people who will suffer will be the people of Brisbane and the south-east corner who do not get the fully integrated public transport services to which they are entitled. If the Federal Government wants to be churlish about it, it can take the \$65m and run, I suppose. But I make this honest and earnest plea to the Prime Minister not to do that but to consider the implications that it would have on the south-east corner of the State if he were to withdraw the \$65m in funding. A light rail service should be part of a fully integrated public transport system for the south-east corner, providing services, getting cars off the street, improving our quality of life, improving our environment and air quality and encouraging people to use public transport as much as possible.

I want to talk about the \$120m hole in the budget for the motorway. I heard the comments of the member for Gregory, the former Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I also heard the comments this morning of the member for Surfers Paradise. I have read articles like the one in the Gold Coast

Bulletin on Friday, 17 July, in which the Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Moggill, described the alleged shortfall as follows—

"The alleged shortfall is just a figment of Mr Hamill's fevered imagination."

I will table this just in case the member has not read it.

I draw the attention of honourable members to a couple of letters that I have unearthed on the files as I have been going through my briefing notes. One letter dated 9 April is from a fellow by the name of Dick Wharton, about whom the former Minister has just spoken fulsomely, to the Under Treasurer, Doug McTaggart, about Pacific Motorway funding. I am going to table these letters, but I will read them briefly. The letter states—

"Following the decision of Cabinet to approve the increased project scope and resulting overall budget for the Pacific Motorway Upgrade, senior officers from our respective agencies have been working together to resolve a joint funding submission for consideration by CBC"—

Cabinet Budget Committee—

"Ministers and the Minister for Transport and Main Roads prior to the 1998-99 State Budget.

While there are a range of issues involved, it seems to me that there are two primary objectives of Government to be met:

the 1998-99 Budget documents should reflect the \$120 million extra funding required in the subsequent two years, and the split between years needs to be consistent with the published expenditure forecasts for the Pacific Motorway; and

the Budget documents should demonstrate that, in the 1999-2000 and 2000-01 years, there will not be any adverse impacts on the balance of the State-funded Roads Program. (This can only be achieved if additional funds are provided to Main Roads for the Pacific Motorway project.)

Following a number of iterations, the attached draft reflects Main Roads' position for your consideration.

As discussed, I look forward to resolving this issue with you as soon as possible."

Guess what? There was no reply from the Under Treasurer to the concerns raised by the former Director-General of the Department of Main Roads on 9 April. The money is not in the budget. \$113m of the \$120m which was meant to have been allocated in the Forward Estimates is not in the budget figures, and the former Minister for Transport and Main Roads knows it.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. The Honourable the Minister is misleading the House. The situation is that that figure of \$120m is in the Forward Estimates for 1999-2000, and he knows it. If he gets a full and proper briefing from his department he will know precisely where I am coming from.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): There is no point of order.

Mr BREDHAUER: I shall now read another letter from the files. The letter is dated 6 May 1998, which was less than a week before the State Budget was brought down by the former Government. Members opposite who know the Budget process would be aware that the document would have been locked up, all the Ministerial Program Statements would have been printed, the Budget would have been finalised, and the Treasurer would have been beaver away on her speech. This letter, dated less than one week before the Budget came down, states—

"In the presentation of this year's budget, it is important that we do not inadvertently give the Opposition an opportunity to criticise the Government over the increased project scope and budget recently approved by Cabinet for the Pacific Motorway."

It was approved in March, three months prior to this. The letter continues—

"There is work underway between our respective Departments to resolve this issue consistent with the Cabinet Decision.

The attached submission developed by the Director-General, Department of Main Roads and Under Treasurer represents the respective views of our Departments. Our respective officers are working towards an agreed position, and we would seek agreement consistent with the following two points:

the 1998-99 Budget documents should reflect the \$120 million extra funding required in the subsequent two years, and the split between years needs to be consistent with the published expenditure forecasts for the Pacific Motorway; and

the Budget documents should demonstrate that, in the 1999-2000 and 2000-01 years, there will not be any adverse impacts on the balance of the State-funded Roads Program. (This can only be achieved if additional funds are provided to Main Roads for the Pacific Motorway project.)

I would like your support in confirming that the key requirements are met."

The letter, signed by Vaughan Johnson, Minister for Transport and Main Roads, was addressed to the then Treasurer, Joan Sheldon. Guess what? There was no answer. It was never in the budget. There was never a reply from the Treasurer to the request for the \$120m to be put in the Forward Estimates of the department. The former Minister has left me with the need to find \$113m in next year's Road Implementation Program and \$7m in the following year. The figure does not appear in the budget. I was left with a \$113m hole to patch next year, and another \$7m hole to patch the year after that.

Not even after writing to his own Treasurer one week before the Budget was brought down could the member for Gregory obtain confirmation that that arrangement would be included the Budget. He did not receive a reply. It was not included in the Budget. Next year, unless I can do the right thing, we will have to find \$113m in the roads budget. I will protect the interests of the Roads Implementation Program, because it is important to all the people who live throughout the length and breadth of Queensland— particularly in the regional and rural areas—to have the road services to which they are entitled. For the information of the House, I will table the letters to which I have referred.

The former Minister failed to deliver and his Treasurer left a \$120m hole in the budget of the Pacific Motorway. If the former Minister comes down to my office at Capital Hill, I will give him the full brief from the department. He will see for himself what I have demonstrated, that is, the \$120m hole in the budget. Senior officers in the Department of Main Roads are quaking as we pull together our budget submissions, because the former Minister failed in his attempt to have the former Treasurer, Mrs Sheldon, the member for Caloundra, include the \$120m in the Forward Estimates of the Budget.

While I am discussing failure to release information in briefings to the Minister, I will discuss briefly the Quaid road. In March when he was under pressure from the Mareeba Shire Council, the Cook Shire Council and some of the members of the Douglas Shire Council, the former Minister received a briefing about the Quaid road. That briefing set out how much the opening of that road would cost. It would cost \$29m to bring the Quaid road to a reasonable standard that would be trafficable by all vehicles. It would cost another \$75m to upgrade the Cook Highway between Wangetti Beach and Buchan Point. That figure does not take into account native title and environmental issues. Over \$100m would be required before the Quaid road could be opened to service a private development. I asked the people in the Mareeba and Cook Shires whether they wanted the Government to spend another \$29m on another corridor between the tablelands and the coast just to service a private development when all the planning had gone into the Kennedy Highway and we have the urgent need for upgrading——

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order. The Honourable Minister is misleading the House. I never signed off on the Quaid road. He knows that. He should withdraw that statement.

Mr BREDHAUER: I never said he did. I am saying that he did not release the information that would have provided the background material for the shires and for the people of far-north Queensland and the rest of Queensland to make an objective assessment about the need for the Quaid road.

Time expired.
