



Speech by

VAUGHAN JOHNSON

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard 17 & 18 November 1998

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (5.52 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill, I say from the outset that this legislation covers some of those matters that I refer to as being omitted from the first Transport Legislation Amendment Bill introduced by the Minister on 6 August this year. Once again, the Opposition is in support of this legislation because, as the Minister is well aware, much of this Bill was drafted under my instruction when I was Minister and when the coalition was in Government.

However, the first provision of this Bill amends the Traffic Act of 1949 to enhance provisions regarding the removal of abandoned vehicles, including trams and animals, from roadways. The reasons for the removal include: that the chief executive officer of a local authority decides that the vehicle is creating a danger, hindrance or obstruction. These amendments also make provision for how local governments can deal with this property in question. Unfortunately, these provisions are necessary as abandoned vehicles are becoming a bigger problem on our roads and more so as the population grows in this State. It is something that we have to address, and it is good to see that it is in this legislation. These amendments will release police officers from these quite time-consuming matters and will permit local authorities to respond quickly to dangerous situations and/or public complaints.

The one thing that I am not quite sure about is: are we talking here about abandoned trams? The Minister smiles! That is a big problem. But given that the Government has abandoned the whole of the Briztram project, it may be just as well that the provisions have been included. I do note that the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill that I had drafted included detailed amendments to the provision of the Briztram light rail project, which was identified in the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for south-east Queensland, which was released in April of 1997. Briztram would have not only created jobs in the construction and operational phases but also greatly assisted in reducing reliance on the motor vehicle in the inner city area.

I think that is one thing that many of us are well aware of. I heard the Minister touch on the Integrated Regional Transport Plan in a ministerial statement that he made to the House this morning. When we talk about the inner city area, we are well aware of the urban development taking place because of people wanting to live in the inner city areas. A very innovative way of using modern technology to move people in vast numbers is to allow them to take advantage of the tram system, the Briztram system, the light rail system, or whatever term one wants to use. It would have encouraged urban renewal and supported inner city living. The project was already being used as a promotional aspect of a number of developments that have fallen victim to Labor's failure to implement infrastructure projects. The light rail project would have attracted tourists to the city and encouraged customers back to the central business district retail centre.

However, there had been little or no news of the replacement light rail project that Labor had waiting in the wings to replace Briztram until we heard the Minister's statement this morning about some of the aspects of the policy that the coalition had already put in place. It was music to my ears and, I am sure, to many members in this House when this morning the Minister announced the Brisbane light rail project—that \$235m project comprising a contribution of funding from all three levels of Government and possible private sector involvement as well as a contribution to the value of \$100m towards the Brisbane City Council's recently released transport plan. In that statement, the Minister said—

"The Brisbane City Council Transport Plan contains a package of measures and the State Government's contribution to the value of \$100m, including \$60m in direct funding and \$40m worth of land, is a significant start to the funding and implementation of this transport plan which will put into place much needed local transport improvements across Brisbane."

I ask the Minister, and I hope that he might clarify this in his reply: is this money to go towards the City/Valley bypass or is it money that is going to be used in other areas of general transportation needs in the greater Brisbane area? If I can just go back firstly to Briztram, I say to the Minister: for God's sake do not lose that \$65m that the Federal Government has already said that it would put into that project, because it is certainly the nucleus of getting this project up and running. The Minister talks about the project itself being a standard gauge issue as far as our Queensland Rail network here in Brisbane is concerned and whether our narrow gauge would be able to interface with that. I do not have a problem with that, but I certainly do have a problem if we are going to lose that \$65m from the Federal Government.

Mr Bredhauer: You can ring John Anderson for me. He will not take my calls and he will not return my calls.

Mr JOHNSON: I take the Minister's point on that. I think we have come to a time when we need a little bit of understanding on this issue. I am somewhat disappointed that John Anderson is not taking the Minister's calls or returning them. I suggest that some diplomacy be exercised here so that we can make a breakthrough on this.

Mr Bredhauer: I am trying to ring him.

Mr JOHNSON: I will certainly be talking to him. I heard the Minister mention in his ministerial statement today that in Canberra the Premier handed the Prime Minister a letter to the effect that he is hoping that that \$65m is secured. It is going to be a sad day for the transportation needs of Brisbane if we see that money lost.

The other matter in the Transport Minister's statement this morning which reflects on this piece of legislation was the \$100m, including \$40m worth of land, to which I made mention. Is that \$100m a contribution from the State Government to the Brisbane City Council or is it a State Government contribution towards the City/Valley bypass?

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (11.36 a.m.), continuing: Last evening in the House during the first part of my address, I was speaking in relation to the City/Valley bypass, bearing in mind that the Minister said yesterday in his ministerial statement that the State Government would not be contributing by way of funding to the City/Valley bypass. All I have seen so far is the de facto Minister, Mr Soorley—the Lord Mayor of Brisbane—telling the State Government how the money should be spent to solve the problems that he has created. I say to the Minister that we need to adopt bipartisan support for this. I believe that we are in a unique situation at present in Brisbane—and for the whole of Queensland for that matter.

I will touch again on the Integrated Regional Transport Plan. I think that that is probably one of the most wonderful documents that has ever been put into circulation by any Government. I know that the former Labor Government was responsible for the conception of that document and I was the one who launched it. I know that it is a living, working document that is going to enable local government in the south-east of this State to plan its transport and infrastructure needs and community needs well into the 21st century.

We have seen something happen for too long in this State, and it has happened in Sydney. As a young boy going to school in Sydney, I remember seeing a block of units built in the north shore area of Sydney. Within 12 months the whole lot was bulldozed to allow a road to go through. That was a considerable loss to that community as well as to the people who had invested in those units. We certainly do not need to see a repeat of that in this State.

The City/Valley bypass is certainly an area that is applicable to the IRTP and I believe that we have to be responsible in how we approach it. I believe that even the Premier himself is concerned about the bottleneck there, which can and should be addressed, because it is in the very heart of his electorate. Considering the growth in the city—especially considering the number of people currently wanting to live in the inner city and Valley areas of New Farm, Teneriffe and surrounding suburbs—we certainly have to address those needs. Again, that comes back to the light rail concept—Briztram or whatever one calls it. This is an issue with which we cannot play politics. It is an issue that we have to get on with.

The Gold Coast Highway is another issue about which I believe the proof of the pudding has been in the eating. No doubt the Minister agrees. I notice that the Minister has had a sign erected to the effect that there are some 1,300 or 1,400 people currently employed on that project.

Mr Bredhauer: 1,480.

Mr JOHNSON: I thank the Minister. I make the point—the Minister is well aware of this—that the projects in question have had a flow-on effect on unemployment right down into northern New South Wales and as far north as Bundaberg and Hervey Bay as a result of people producing and supplying goods.

Mr Bredhauer: We estimate about 4,000 jobs.

Mr JOHNSON: That figure is considerably higher than I thought it was. I thought it was around 3,500 jobs. That is fantastic news. Before I left the role of Minister responsible for the Departments of Transport and Main Roads, I asked my engineers to put in place what they see is the grand plan for addressing the transportation needs of the greater Brisbane/south-east corner of Queensland as we progress into the 21st century. The Minister will be able to talk to these people, and I hope he carries on with the plan. Some of the best engineers in the Commonwealth are working in the Queensland Departments of Transport and Main Roads. I believe that, before the Gold Coast project is completed, we should be looking to see where else we can use this expertise and knowledge—I refer to the contractors and road builders as well—to carry on with the work that should be done.

Mr Littleproud: There's a little bit of road west of Dalby.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, the Uralla bypass is another project—\$13m, I think. We are talking about not only the south-east corner but the whole of Queensland. Even development in the Minister's own area around Cairns needs to be addressed. We could talk about areas right throughout the State. I note that the member for Chermside is in the Chamber. The Nundah bottleneck also has to be addressed. We could take shots at each other across the Chamber about what has and has not happened in the past, but we must make these plans a reality. This city is growing. This State is growing. The population of this State will double early in the 21st century, and we have to make sure we have planning and engineering initiatives in place so that we can deal with that increase properly, precisely and responsibly.

Mr Sullivan: Can I ask you a question?

Mr JOHNSON: Yes.

Mr Sullivan: The IRTTP outlines a plan, but isn't the difficulty that when you start to implement it it will impinge on people and they do not want that in their backyards?

Mr JOHNSON: That is exactly what the IRTTP is all about. It is a living, working document. The Minister will add to that. The idea of the IRTTP is to enable people to plan. Local authorities, State Governments and Federal Governments can all plan together responsibly to ensure that projects will not impinge on the backyards of the people the member for Chermside refers to. If a young couple buy a home, they will know that they can be in that home for the rest of their lives. They can rear their family there and do not need to be worried about someone coming along in 10 or 15 years' time, bulldozing that community and putting a road through for their own financial gain. The IRTTP is about making absolutely certain that these communities can grow and that people can live and work together.

Mr Sullivan: Some of the IRTTP plans show that roads need to be built where there are currently homes. It will impinge on existing homes.

Mr JOHNSON: The northern inner busway is a real problem. I am certainly not going to play politics with that issue. We have to look at that issue together responsibly. It is a real concern for the Brisbane City Council. It is a concern for the Department of Transport and the Department of Main Roads. I think we have to work through the issues together to make absolutely certain that we see these busways put in place for the benefit of people in the future.

I come back to the issue of public transport. There is nothing nearer and dearer to my heart. We have to start educating our community about public transport. We need to educate our schoolchildren about public transport. We need to encourage them to use it after they have left school. My son, who is currently attending the Queensland University of Technology, uses public transport all the time. We have to teach our kids to take advantage of the public transport system so that we can get private vehicles off the road. We need to utilise our busways and the other aspects of our public transport system—Queensland Rail, the ferry service or whatever.

During a speech on other transport legislation I warned the Minister about allowing the Lord Mayor to proceed. I advised him to check on his plans relating to different issues. I had a very good working relationship with Maureen Hayes, the transport spokesperson here in Brisbane. No doubt the Minister has, as well. We have to take a bipartisan approach to this to make absolutely certain that it works.

Mr Bredhauer: Soorley said you weren't a bad poor beggar, either.

Mr JOHNSON: Is that right? I do not want the Minister to hide behind what Lord Mayor Jim is saying, thus pretending that this major decision on the future of transport in south-east Queensland has nothing to do with him. It certainly does, but at the same time it has a great deal to do with the Minister.

We certainly do not want a repeat of the koala tunnel. I note that the former Transport Minister is in the Chamber. What a grand opportunity this is for me to take the mickey out of him.

Mr Hamill: You are still hurting because——

Mr JOHNSON: I am not hurting at all. The member could not make a decision. He is now the Treasurer of the State! What did he spend on that road when he was Transport Minister? It was something like \$77m. That amount of money was wasted down there, buying land. The figure was probably closer to \$120m or \$130m.

Mr Littleproud: What about that tunnel for the koalas?

Mr JOHNSON: That is what I am talking about. Those opposite cannot handle the truth sometimes. I see the member for Sunnybank laughing.

Mr Robertson: You are not going to start on me, are you?

Mr JOHNSON: No.

Mr Robertson: You always come off worst when you do that.

Mr JOHNSON: I have been in a lot of hard brawls in my time and I reckon the member for Sunnybank would be a lightweight.

Mr Hamill: By the look of you, you lost most of them.

Mr JOHNSON: I will talk about that later. There is considerable work to be done on the busways here in Brisbane and in the south-east. I mention the South East Transit Project. I believe that \$540m program will be the start of many changes to public transport in this part of Queensland, especially interfacing with the Logan area and the CBD of Brisbane. Bus stations are currently under construction at Garden City and Springwood—once again, an initiative of the coalition Government.

This investment in busway infrastructure will need to be supported by bus priority measures. The required amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act and the Transport Planning and Coordination Act to enable the department to facilitate and manage these matters have been excluded from this legislation. I call upon the Minister, now that he has almost finished re-announcing the initiatives of the Borbidge coalition Government, to advise this House of his intention regarding the management of the busways issues. I, in common with others, would like to know whether it is still the intention that the chief executive will be the management authority for these busways, which are being constructed with taxpayer funding. Have there been others suggesting that they can spend State money better?

Part 2 of this Bill before the House relates to the Transport (Gladstone East End to Harbour Corridor) Act 1996. This Act was introduced by the coalition Government to provide for a rail corridor to allow QCL to expand its Gladstone facilities. This expansion permitted the closure of the Darra plant and also helped in stopping coral dredging in Moreton Bay. Again, this is about allowing the great industrial city of Gladstone to get its planning right. The Premier's unemployment target over the next five years is 5%. Gladstone is certainly a part of Queensland that can assist in reaching that unemployment target.

Currently there is a group of schoolchildren in the gallery. This is the generation for whom we as members of Parliament are responsible. When we talk about unemployment, it is our responsibility to make certain, whether it be Gladstone, Brisbane, Cairns, out in the west of the State or wherever, that we put infrastructure in place that will take up that slack in unemployment.

The amendments that members are currently considering are retrospective, as they clarify the actual property descriptions for land acquisitions that have already taken place. Part 4 of this Bill amends the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 for a number of reasons. The first allows for access to property for those who are examining the feasibility of new railway corridors. The immediate application of these provisions will relate to the further assessment of the Surat Dawson project, which is better known to members of this House and the wider community as SUDAW, and which was again an initiative of the coalition Government working in conjunction with private enterprise. That is a job creator and a wealth generator of magnificent proportions for this State. It is great that it has been included in this piece of legislation, because that will allow the project to get under way. It will also allow the planners of the project to take advantage of the necessary transport arteries and corridors to facilitate the carriage of coal from the mines in question to the ports—whether they be at Gladstone or Bundaberg.

I notice that the Minister was generous enough to acknowledge in his second-reading speech that this project has the potential to generate thousands of jobs throughout the State. This is an absolutely magnificent project, one that I believe is probably second only to the Bowen Basin coalfields and one that is going to generate enormous wealth in conjunction with the north-west mineral province around Mount Isa/Cloncurry. Members of this House and people outside this House do not realise the enormity of the untapped wealth of this State. We are in the very fortunate situation of once again being able to work with private enterprise—and for Government to work with private enterprise—to make

this a reality. It is a fantastic initiative, and it is one that I believe will have terrific benefits to this State as a whole—not only to this State but to the economy of this State and nation. When the project commences, the Minister might like to ensure that a sign is erected to record the job creation by the coalition—like the one on the Pacific Motorway. I am not having a shot at the Minister; it is about recognising what we did in Government. As Minister, I certainly recognised some of the things that the member did when formerly in Government. I believe that this project could create probably 2,000 or 3,000 jobs—maybe more. None of us know that at this time.

People said that the Pacific Motorway could not be built. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. I applaud the contractors and the people who have worked on that project to date. While the coalition put it in place, I am pleased that this Government is supporting that project and this program, because it will be a major benefactor to the south-east part of this State as we progress into the 21st century. I hope and trust that the current Minister and this Government are looking at other ways and means of utilising existing corridors in the south-east of the State to address future transportation needs as our population increases and we progress into the 21st century. So I urge all those travellers who pass by the job signs on the Pacific Motorway to remember who created those jobs. I ask them to remember that, under Labor, there would have been toll gates and they would be paying a toll for the privilege of driving from the Gold Coast to Brisbane.

Mr Hamill: Not so.

Mr JOHNSON: The south-east motorway—the Minister was going to make that a toll road. The Treasurer is now shaking his head.

Mr Hamill: It was always to be a free road.

Mr JOHNSON: A free road? Yes, when one put two bob into the slot to get onto it!

Mr Hamill: No.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, it was. It was the south-east toll road.

Mr Hamill: You misunderstood the whole thing.

Mr JOHNSON: The Minister has changed the rules again. He is pretty good at changing the rules halfway through a game. Every time someone goes to kick a goal, he likes to squeeze the goalposts. We used to leave them as they were.

Mr Lucas: I think you've head butted a few too many goalposts.

Mr JOHNSON: Not me! I played the game fairly and squarely. But my mate the Treasurer, the member for Ipswich—I am not too sure whether he played.

Mr Hamill: What?

Mr JOHNSON: Did he ever play any sport?

Mr Hamill: Yes.

Mr JOHNSON: What did the Treasurer play?

Mr Hamill: I won't give you a long list now. I'll write you a letter.

Mr JOHNSON: Righto! Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that you are going to chip me in a minute for getting away from the legislation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Clark): Order! The member should return to the debate on this Bill.

Mr JOHNSON: I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the Treasurer does provoke me somewhat. Every time I see him, I have to take the micky out of him. I cannot help it!

Mr Palaszczuk: To be a Rhodes scholar, you have to play sport.

Mr JOHNSON: The member has baffled me with science on that one. I understand that to be a Rhodes scholar one has to play sport. I am not sure what sport the Treasurer played when he was the Minister for Transport in this State. It certainly was not roads. And as to road funding under the former Minister—I would have written a longer speech. I have another 26 minutes left, and I do not want to take up any more time on that.

Mr Hamill: You haven't written a speech at all. You're just living off interjections.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I am not.

Mr Hamill: Yes, you are.

Mr JOHNSON: No, I am not.

Mr Hamill: There you go again!

Mr JOHNSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, would you protect me?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member should continue with his speech and ignore any interjections that he does not want to take.

Mr JOHNSON: Would you ask him to leave the Chamber?

The Bill before us also amends the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 so that arrangements exist to facilitate the provisions of miscellaneous transport infrastructure, like conveyors or, in particular, pipelines. These provisions are quite reasonable, particularly given the inordinate interest that the Labor Government has been taking in the Chevron pipeline. This legislation also amends the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 to close the loophole that has been permitting some charter bus operators to operate as taxis, particularly in the Minister's own region around Cairns. While I support the amendments, I suggest that the Minister and the department keep a close eye on other public transport operations in Cairns to ensure that operations accord with the intention of the legislation.

The amendments proposed to the Integrated Planning Act 1997 are consequential and ensure that minor works associated with rail feasibility studies are exempted from the Act. Part 7 provides for a decision by the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade to exclude a decision regarding the miscellaneous infrastructure to cross another transport corridor from the Judicial Review Act. I notice the Minister's assurance that such exemptions will only affect Government or Government-owned corporation land. That does not mean, however, that such a decision may not impact upon others in the vicinity of the crossing.

I note that the Minister has relied on similar provisions in the Transport (Gladstone East End to Harbour Corridor) Act 1996 as justification for these provisions. That was one particular arrangement, whereas what is being proposed now is a generic arrangement. I will simply note that the then shadow Minister for Transport, who now is the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade, is being given this power. During the debate about the Transport (Gladstone East End to Harbour Corridor) Act, he sought assurances that there would be no disadvantage to locals by the establishment of the corridor. I now ask no less of him and ask for similar assurances about those potentially more numerous and significant decisions.

I again indicate the Opposition's support for this legislation, and I look forward to the Minister commenting upon the matters of reservation that I have raised.

As we approach the Christmas period here in Queensland, I wish to reflect on the road toll of this State. I know that all members would share my delight at the success of Campaign 300, which I initiated as Minister. I know that the current Minister very ably supports that campaign. Campaign 300 has worked extremely well. Many people are not aware that we have brought down the road toll in this State. In 1995, I think the figure was 456.

Mr Sullivan: Almost 500.

Mr JOHNSON: The figure was 456. We have it down to a bit over 200 at the moment, and I am hoping that it will come in well under 300 for this year. I hope that next year we will have a similar campaign that will help the people of Queensland say that we have a target. It is a sad thing when we talk about a target for road deaths. Although we have that carnage on our roads, Campaign 300 has probably saved 400 people from being severely injured on our roads this year. I salute the officers of Queensland Transport, particularly those in Paul Blake's section, the Land Transport and Safety Division, and also Inspector Michael Hannigan from the Queensland Police Service for the great work that those two units in those respected departments have done in bringing the road toll to the lowest level the State has ever witnessed. I salute drivers, pedestrians and everybody else who uses the State's roads, byways and footpaths for being so responsible this year. I hope, pray and trust that 1999 will have similar results. I take this opportunity to wish everybody in the Departments of Transport and Main Roads and the Queensland Police Service well for 1999. I thank them for their work in 1998 and the support that they gave me as Minister. I wish each and every one of them a very pleasant Christmas and new year.
