



Speech by

Mr W. BAUMANN

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

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COACHTRANS

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (11.18 p.m.): I bring to the attention of the House the plight of pensioners living in a couple of the northern areas of the Gold Coast which form part of my electorate. Those people have been left stranded by the closure of two shopping bus services. The local bus company operating in that area is Coachtrans. Last week, Coachtrans ended its twice weekly services between the Coomera area and Southport and the five times a week service between Jacobs Well and Beenleigh.

Mr Mackenroth: Isn't that the one you used to own?

Mr BAUMANN: Yes. Incidentally, I was the chief executive officer of that particular bus company.

Mr Mackenroth: They wouldn't have closed down while you were CEO.

Mr BAUMANN: I am glad that the member has some concern for the company.

Mr Beanland: Is he going to subsidise it?

Mr BAUMANN: We will delve into that and no doubt spend some time with the Transport Minister.

Mr Mackenroth: It could be a pecuniary interest. I will not fall for that one.

Mr BAUMANN: No, there is no pecuniary interest here.

I now wish to quote from the Gold Coast Bulletin of 9 November, which stated—

"The company said it could no longer afford to keep the routes going because they were losing more than \$1000 a week.

The two services carry about 150 passengers a week, mainly older people with no cars or those who no longer drive ..."

or those who are too young to drive. Some 150 passengers per week will now be disadvantaged. Of course, the managing director has blamed the State Government for its ongoing refusal to subsidise these types of services. I know that the Minister's office has been contacted in relation to this matter. I will need to have some further discussions with him in relation to this issue.

The history of this matter goes back many years. Under the former Goss Government, our former coalition Government and the current Labor Government the area has been neglected in that many changes have been made to the operation of public transport within those service areas. Gone are the old licensed areas that were in existence previously, when the area was allocated to a particular operator who could work exclusively in that area, similar to the way the contract works now. The contract areas now reflect the same thing. But, unfortunately for this particular operator, since the licence has expired in the area no contract has been issued. Hence, there is no security of tenure. Problems have then arisen because there is no collateral to take to the banks to continue to borrow, expand and operate services. In previous years, the services were able to be cross-subsidised from the profits made from within other company operations and these services were able to be maintained. That joy and bliss does not exist these days.

A reason for that is the Federal Government initiative introduced by a former State Labor Government that gave us the marvellous Gold Coast rail service. Nobody would knock that service; it is

marvellous. It has carried more than five million passengers since it was opened in February 1996. I have travelled on the service and appreciate how good it is. However, that service is subsidised to the tune of about \$80m a year. Although none of us questions the commonsense of providing that subsidy, given that the south-east corner is the fastest growing area in Australia and that these services will almost certainly be fully utilised at some future time, this bus company, operating as it is between two other well subsidised operators, has received no assistance and now has no ability to continue to offer services to the likes of pensioners. The article I mentioned carries a photo of two old ladies hitchhiking near the bus stop because the bus service no longer exists.

I beg the Minister to consider this case and expedite this issue through the bureaucratic maze. The rail stations at Coomera and Pimpama have no bus services operating, even though there are many bus bays available. I can see by the look on the face of the Speaker that my time has expired so I will discuss the issue with the Minister tomorrow.

Time expired.
