



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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ROAD TRANSPORT REFORM BILL

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (4.28 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the Road Transport Reform Bill 1999. The Bill looks at various aspects of road use legislation, including speeding, overloading and drink-driving. They are all very important issues to be dealt with. Obviously, constant review of road regulations is required. One of the big challenges, of course, is to make sure that regulations are compatible from one State to another. It is frustrating when we in Queensland want to introduce something that we think is good for the State, but are held back until we get agreement from the other States. I guess this is one of the little frustrations that we have to put up with, because at the end of the day it is insupportable to have different regulations in each State. Different regulations confuse people, particularly our very valuable tourists.

Speeding is probably the first thing that comes to most people's minds when they think and talk about road regulations. I remind the House that it was a coalition Government, under the previous Minister the member for Gregory, that took the decision to introduce speed cameras to Queensland. Obviously some people in the community had a different point of view. I agreed very strongly with the introduction of speed cameras. They have had an obvious effect on the road toll. Those of us who read the reports issued by Queensland Transport relating to road accidents and road deaths can see that there was a very clear downturn in the road toll from the time speed cameras were introduced. The number of road deaths in Queensland is about as low as it has been for 30 years, notwithstanding the tremendous increase in the number of vehicles on the roads. It is a little disconcerting to see that the pattern established last year is not being followed this year. The road toll seems to be sneaking up again. Obviously this needs to be looked at to make sure we do not lose some of the benefit that was gained last year by the use of speed cameras and other initiatives.

Overloading on our roads, particularly on rural roads, is quite an issue. I have been travelling around the State with colleagues from both sides of the House on the Public Works Committee, which is presently looking at the maintenance of roads in country areas. The input of councillors and council engineers has been interesting. They are very concerned about the effect of heavy vehicles on their roads. The loading of vehicles above the load they are registered to carry is obviously something that has to be followed up.

As is the case with speeding, the community is now far less inclined to condone drink-driving than it was several years ago. I think we have all been to functions at which some people will not drink alcohol at all. They will not even try to stay just under the limit; they will not have any alcohol because they will be driving. When my three children were attempting to gain their licences, the road toll was a lot higher than it is now. There were more people on the road who were driving under the influence of alcohol, there were more people speeding and the roads up to the Sunshine Coast were not as good as they are now. The four-lane road had just been built.

Mr Veivers: You don't look that old.

Mr LAMING: The member for Southport says that I do not look that old. Maybe that is because I do not worry about my children on the road as much as I would have had it not been for initiatives implemented by successive Governments in relation to improving roads on the north coast and addressing the issues of speeding and drink-driving. Perhaps that explains my youthful appearance.

The increase in road usage is a big issue. Obviously, public transport has been and will continue to be a contentious issue. It is one of those things we go around in circles on. Do we put public transport in place and hope that people use it or do we wait for the demand and then meet the need? I think we ought to consider whether public transport should be looked at from a user pays perspective or whether it should be looked at as a community service obligation of State or perhaps local government.

Whether it is public or private transport that is using the roads, they need to be expanded. The widening of roads always causes social or environmental problems. The creation of new corridors is even more difficult for Governments of any complexion to come to grips with because of both environmental problems and the social problems presented by people who live nearby.

I refer to the CAMCOS public transport corridor proposed to run into the north coast, basically into Maroochydore. I have been committed to this process for a number of years, even before I came into this place. I believe very strongly that we need such a corridor leading into the coast and hopefully right up to Noosa. Many concerns have been expressed about the planning process, which is a pity. Only last week, an editorial in the Sunshine Coast Daily suggested that this was an unnecessary service forced upon us. I was very saddened to read that in the newspaper, because other editorials in the same newspaper have stated that such a corridor is very necessary. Perhaps those comments are a symptom of the frustration some people feel about the route and the mode of transport to be used in the corridor. Perhaps it is not where the majority of people would like it to be. There is a feeling on the part of some in the community that, although there is a consultation process in place, people might be listening but not taking heed of what has been put forward.

As I said earlier, I am committed to a public transport corridor. I will refer a little later to whether rail or some other mode of transport should be used. In 20 years' time, when I expect to be enjoying my retirement on the Sunshine Coast, I do not want to hear people say, "I wish people in the late 1990s had planned for public transport and had planned for a better route through the Sunshine Coast. Then we would not have the problems that we now have." I do not want the Sunshine Coast to end up in the same situation as that faced by Buderim, which has only one road through it. In an engineering sense, it is almost impossible to do anything to overcome that problem. I am concerned that the route and the mode might be predetermined. I hope that the Minister, his advisers and the department are still open to suggestion as to the route, the ultimate destination and the mode of transport to be utilised.

I have brought to the attention of the Minister the fact that the current proposed route crosses the Mooloolah River three times. That concerns me. I have a lot of interest in the Mooloolah River from an environmental point of view. It seems a pity that engineers tend to think in straight lines. I think there are cases where we should be—

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr LAMING: I will come to the issue of trains a little later.

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mr LAMING: I think even trains have the ability to turn corners to a certain extent and I would like to think that that possibility is being taken into account. The environment is not the only consideration. Almost 20 years ago, a very important flood study of the Mooloolah River was carried out in order to ensure that the area around Mooloolaba and Kawana would not flood. I have written to the Minister in relation to that study and I hope that it and its recommendations will be taken into consideration when the route is decided upon and when it is determined how many times the Mooloolah River is to be crossed. There are three proposed routes through Mooloolaba. I really cannot understand why there are three. One is reasonable, the second is not very good at all and the third is terrible. I will nail my colours to the mast: I believe that the only route is a western route, which has much less impact on the people who live there, very little environmental impact and the advantage of being very close to the high school and the TAFE college. The TAFE college has put forward a very attractive proposition for a transit centre in the vicinity. Whether that is the right place for it is—

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr LAMING: The TAFE college at Mooloolaba.

Mr Welford: Which route is it?

Mr LAMING: The western route of the three alternatives through Mooloolaba.

Moving further north, there is the issue of where the terminus of the line would be—whether it is Maroochydore, on the motorway, or in the CBD. There seems to be very little public support for it to go into the CBD. Nobody to whom I have spoken seems to want it to go in there. There is also the effect that it might have on the Horton Park golf course, which is a very valuable green area in the centre of the CBD. It would be a great pity if that became non-viable because it lost some of its land to a transport corridor. I hope that all these issues are considered carefully.

I did promise the Minister that I would come back to the mode of transport. The consultation process talks about choices. I hope that the decision is not made to go with heavy rail. I believe that is

the favoured option at the moment. I have looked at this and have done a bit of personal research. I believe that the various modes should be considered closely first, because there are different requirements in regard to the route. Some modes of transport can turn tight corners and avoid the hills and the sensitive environmental and social areas. The one to which I refer, of course, is the O-bahn, which is very popular in Adelaide. It is quiet, it is much cheaper, it is more flexible, and it does not have overhead powerlines. It is really popular in Adelaide. I would like to think that it is seriously being considered.

Mr Lucas: Why do you think they call the rail lines "whispering death"? Because they're so quiet.

Mr LAMING: Unfortunately, I do not have time to take many interjections. I usually enjoy them, but I have a bit more to get through.

It is a rail for the community. The community will be using it. It will be in their community, and they will pay for it. So the input of those people is very important in that regard. I do respect the opinion of engineers. But as an old councillor once told me when I was on the Caloundra council: engineers should be on tap but never on top.

I now return to an issue that I raised in this House last week, that is, the proposed Buderim supermarket. This proposal was appealed against by the Department of Main Roads three years ago. Since that time, I have been involved in countless meetings, deputations, correspondence and phone calls in an effort to express my concern regarding the possible impact of traffic congestion on Buderim's only—and I repeat "only"—through road, the Buderim-Mooloolaba Road, which happens to be a State-controlled road.

Last week, I requested from the Minister a briefing with DMR officers. That took place yesterday—and I appreciate that—with Mr Don Muir, Mr Steve Golding and Mr Gary Fisher. I appreciated the opportunity to be briefed on this issue. Mr Golding and Mr Fisher have been aware of my concern about the possible effects on traffic from this proposal for quite a long time. Unfortunately, this briefing has not entirely convinced me that my longstanding concerns are misplaced. I was advised that any move to withdraw the appeal would not occur this week but could be considered as early as next week. The Minister might like to confirm this with me. This will give the community representatives the opportunity to address the Minister at next Sunday's Community Cabinet deputation, which I understand has been arranged.

I was advised that the appeal was originally lodged because DMR had insufficient traffic information. This situation should never have occurred, and I hope that the more recent IPA legislation will avoid such situations occurring in the future. Notwithstanding this, many of the grounds for appeal were, I believe, valid. In fact, I was advised that, yes, there could be increased traffic and congestion, but that it would be manageable.

Another ground for appeal was that there would be more turning movements, aggravated by trucks. I was advised that there may be some increase and that there could be some impediment to the flow of pedestrians. Another ground for appeal was that vehicles would need to queue to access the site; and this, too, was acknowledged. I was assured that the department has not requested or been offered or received any funding contribution from the developer.

I believe that I have related the matters raised at the briefing accurately. If not, the Minister might like to clarify them during his reply. I have stated on other occasions that it was my belief that the building of the Ballinger/Lindsay Road roundabout at a total cost to Main Roads and council of over \$1m was intended to address an existing traffic congestion problem, not to improve flow, so that further significant traffic-generating proposals could proceed, thus putting the traffic situation back to how it was previously.

I appreciate the position that DMR officers are in and would like to say that I enjoy a very good working relationship with them. They are often placed in a difficult position, and such is the position in relation to this matter. Their role now seems to be to make the best of a difficult situation. I table a Brameld report today on traffic, which independently seems to support the claim that traffic congestion will increase significantly. I am advised that the full report that was commissioned by the department is not available to me in case it is required in court. On asking during the briefing whether any guarantee could be given that there would be no significant increase in traffic or congestion, this was not forthcoming. And although I do understand the difficulty of separating out specific supermarket traffic, I believe that this could be done if it was not done in the traffic report.

There are those who do not oppose this development, and I make it clear that my only interest is in the traffic situation on the main road. With an ambulance station and a fire auxiliary feeding onto this road and a police station also proposed close by, I have a genuine concern regarding the ability of the road to stay reasonably free of avoidable congestion. It is clearly my responsibility, as the local State member on behalf of those I represent, to bring these concerns to the Minister's attention. I ask

the Minister, when he meets with members of Buderim 2000 next Sunday, to listen to their concerns carefully and to assess the weight of their argument before finalising the appeal process. If a traffic plan has been devised that will solve this problem and thus avoid their concerns and mine, I trust that that plan will be made available on Sunday. If such a plan does not achieve this outcome, I believe it would be better to leave the appeal in place and allow the matter to be decided by the court.
