



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee C
Report**

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (4.24 p.m.): I am pleased to speak to the report of Estimates Committee C in relation to the Transport and Main Roads portfolio and also the Public Works and Housing portfolio. At the outset, I thank committee secretariat. In particular, I thank the research director, Rob Hansen, Hansard, the other parliamentary staff and also the staff of the relevant ministerial departments and officers in relation to the matter.

It is my firm opinion that both portfolios have flourished under the capable and innovative stewardship of both Ministers Steve Bredhauer and Rob Swarten.

In relation to Transport and Main Roads, it is with great pleasure that the Beattie Government Budget proposes to spend a record of some \$3.467 billion for Transport and Main Roads for 1999-2000. The Budget provides for more than \$1 billion for roads, \$795m for rail and \$238m for transport capital projects. I wish particularly to spend some time discussing Queensland Rail and its importance to Queensland and some of the exciting Budget initiatives in that area. One of the Beattie Government's election commitments was for the diesel tilt train between Brisbane and Cairns—the one that the member for Gregory has spent so much time knocking. This Government has a commitment totalling \$138m to build two new tilt trains at Walkers in Maryborough, with some \$30m allocated in this year's Budget to commence the construction. But what are the benefits?

Firstly, we can see the \$138m being invested in building two new tilt trains at Walkers in Maryborough. This is an off-Budget commitment which is separate and in addition to the Government's ordinary budgetary commitment. Interestingly, some \$87m is also being spent on the assembly of 38 diesel locomotives at Walkers in Maryborough. One of the benefits of the new tilt train will be in the slashing of travel times between Brisbane and Cairns by some four hours. Rail can be a real competitor to other forms of transport. I am a regular rail traveller and find it comfortable, relaxing and safe. I understand that load factors on the tilt train to Rockhampton are as high as 120%. In other words, they are selling more tickets on the train than its seating capacity. How can that be possible? It is because some people are getting on the train, say, at Brisbane and getting off at Maryborough, at which point more people are getting on at Maryborough to go to Rockhampton. They are selling more tickets than there are seats on the train. That is a fantastic initiative. That is an example of this Government being proactive and building on that important record.

However, it is not about Travel Train and long-distance services alone. Queensland Rail will spend \$240m on the track upgrade between Townsville and Rockhampton, including the replacement of old sleepers with concrete sleepers. This will allow our freight trains to operate at speeds of up to 120 km/h all the way through to Townsville. Just the other day I read a report from the New South Wales equivalent of our Travelsafe Committee. It spent considerable time praising the fantastic record of Queensland Rail and the decisions of successive Governments and their attitude to upgrading our rail infrastructure. In retrospect, some have raised questions about the necessity for electrification from Brisbane to Rockhampton as compared to spending all of those moneys on track alignment. Whatever the real position on that aspect, the New South Wales committee commended the fact that, when electrification took place, it was also combined with substantial increased improvements in track

alignment and eliminating many old deviations. That is something that they have never done in New South Wales. I am not sure of the exact time period in question, but over the past decade or so, Queensland has spent more on rail infrastructure than the rest of Australia combined. Under Kennett and his privatisation-mad former Victorian Government, rail track quality disintegrated in that State. We are now a narrow-gauge railway leading the country.

I wish to commend some other important initiatives. I commend the intelligent use of the rail right of way throughout Queensland as a band link for fibre optic cable between Cairns and Brisbane. That will bring competition and is a good use of assets. Extra money will be generated by those assets without affecting our viability.

Also, I commend the Minister on the police station initiative for the Manly Railway Station, which is within my electorate. I questioned the Minister in detail at the Estimates in relation to the port of Brisbane. I note the exciting record of the Port of Brisbane Corporation, whether it be in respect of the Australia Trade Coast, in which it is a partner, whether it be in respect of Island Packing and Storage, the on-site seamless facilities for packing cotton, whether it be in respect of Globex International, which officially opened its new bulk commodity export facility this year, or whether it be in respect of Fleetfit, which will be a major tenant of a precinct designed to plan for the future needs of the car industry. A very large component of the traffic to and from the port goes by rail. However, the Port Road is important, too, and I look forward to hearing a lot about that in the future, because I know that this Minister is very committed to it.

Although I do not have much time left, I wish to say something about Public Works and Housing. In particular, I commend this Minister as a Minister who takes great interest in housing. I have found him to be excellent to deal with in terms of issues in my electorate. In one of his muckraking exercises, the shadow Minister attacked Housing in relation to Selina Street in Wynnum North. Had he checked his facts properly, he would have seen that there is a proposal to redevelop those houses in the near future with seniors housing that will be of good quality, and that will do credit to the local area. The department should not be spending money on upgrading old houses when it suits the local community and suits individual tenants to upgrade to something more suitable. I would have liked to have spent a little more time speaking about some other issues, in particular the—

Time expired.
