



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 15 April 1999

ROAD TRANSPORT REFORM BILL

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads)
(12.01 p.m.): I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The Road Transport Reform Bill will introduce into Queensland a comprehensive and integrated road transport reform package which will deliver significant, long-term economic, safety and efficiency benefits to Queenslanders. Given the comprehensive nature of the Bill, extensive and ongoing consultation has been undertaken with all major Government, community, union and industry stakeholders, and I am pleased to say that there is a strong level of support for the reforms contained in this Bill.

There are four major areas in the Bill where reforms will deliver significant benefits for Queenslanders—

firstly, the Bill will deliver benefits through the introduction of national reforms and by progressing the modernisation of road use legislation in Queensland;

secondly, the Bill will deliver benefits from improved management of those small minority of heavy vehicle drivers and owners who endanger Queensland motorists and other road users and cause substantial damage to our roads by consistently flouting the law in areas such as speeding, overloading and driving hours;

thirdly, the Bill will improve road safety by improving the deterrence effect of drink-driving penalties; and

lastly, the Bill will improve outcomes for Queenslanders in a number of small but critical elements of Queensland Transport road use management.

I will deal with each of these areas in turn.

The first area where the Bill will deliver benefits for Queenslanders is the significant role it plays in progressing national uniformity in road transport legislation and in progressing the modernisation and reform of road use legislation in Queensland. Queensland is at the forefront of the development and implementation of national uniformity in road transport, and this Bill is the first piece of legislation in Australia which will support the practical implementation of the Australian Road Rules and the National Driver Licence Scheme into a State jurisdiction. These reforms will be implemented on 1 December 1999.

I wish to highlight the importance of the adoption of the Australian Road Rules. The Australian Road Rules will introduce simple, practical and uniform road laws, and will eliminate confusion and inconsistencies which presently exist between the jurisdictions. The national rules will also have a major benefit for the tourism industry by making it safer for tourists travelling around Australia. Passage of the Bill will also ensure that the Queensland Government will meet the requirements for tranche payments under the National Competition Policy.

I would like to make it clear that the introduction of these national reforms from 1 December 1999 will not create any hardship or confusion for Queensland road users. The major change in the National Driver Licence Scheme is the introduction of new driver licence classifications, and these have already been introduced by Queensland ahead of schedule in 1996. The on-road changes arising from

the new road rules are minimal and there will be a comprehensive Statewide communication campaign to ensure Queensland drivers are well aware of any changes. This also provides a golden opportunity to re-educate Queensland motorists and road users on simple road rules.

The Bill progresses legislative reform in Queensland by ensuring obsolete and expiring road use legislation is consolidated into the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995. The Bill also ensures the continuity of expiring regulations, which will be replaced by new policy reforms. Reforms to the management of motor vehicle safety will be introduced on 30 September 1999. However, current regulations governing motor vehicle safety expire on 1 July 1999. To ensure the continuity of regulations governing motor vehicle safety, this Bill extends the expiry date to 30 September 1999. Reforms to the management of vehicle registration will also be introduced by 30 September 1999. To ensure the continuity of regulations governing vehicle registration, the Bill extends the expiry date of the current regulation to 30 September 1999, as it is also set to expire on 1 July 1999.

The second area where the Bill will deliver benefits for Queenslanders is the reforms to allow Queensland Transport to better manage heavy vehicle operators and drivers on Queensland roads who consistently and deliberately flout the law, especially in the area of speeding and overloading. The Bill enables the implementation of the National Managing Heavy Vehicle Speeding Policy, which introduces an improved penalty regime in relation to speeding heavy vehicles by extending the chain of responsibility to the owner of a vehicle as well as the driver. The new penalty regime will contain a series of graduated penalties for operators of heavy vehicles that are consistently caught exceeding the speed limit in high speed limit areas. These penalties will range from a warning through to a three-month suspension of registration, and will be fully implemented after regulatory amendments are made later this year.

The Bill will also provide for the introduction of a new penalty regime to manage heavy vehicle operators and drivers who consistently display a pattern of irresponsible behaviour on Queensland roads. This initiative will address heavy vehicle operators from both within Queensland and interstate who have failed to effectively prevent repeated and serious violations of transport law. These violations will include offences such as road rage incidents, breaches of fatigue management guidelines, and unsafe vehicle maintenance, which are all regarded as unsafe transport practices, as opposed to unsafe driving practices, which are currently managed through the existing demerit point system.

The new penalty regime will include the suspension of the registration of a Queensland registered vehicle, or the suspension of an interstate driver's privilege to use the road network. The purpose of this initiative is to improve road safety on Queensland roads by giving Queensland Transport the ability to target the small number of vehicle operators and drivers who place Queenslanders at risk on our roads by consistently breaking the law as a day-to-day part of running their business. This new regime will be fully implemented after the introduction of regulatory amendments later this year.

The other area of concern with heavy vehicles is grossly overloaded vehicles, which cause substantial damage to our roads and are an unacceptable risk on our roads. In this context, the impending National Mass Limits Review initiative raised concerns that the review may lead to an increase in gross overloading on Queensland's roads. In response to these concerns, the Bill introduces an improved overloading sanctions regime to provide a more effective deterrence to operators of grossly overloaded vehicles.

The objective of this new regime is to achieve more consistent, objective and transparent decision making in the courts when penalties are being applied to overloading offences. This revised scheme clearly shows the relationship between the penalties imposed and the road safety and road damage costs of overloaded vehicles. The scheme introduces a graduated penalty scheme, which is dependent on the severity of the overload, and ranges through to the court's ability to order the forfeiture of the vehicle used in the commission of the offence. This would only apply to heavy vehicles which pose an intolerable danger to the public. While these vehicles are a small minority, at 0.06% of heavy vehicles, they can cause significant damage to the road network and could bring about bridge failures.

The third area where the Bill will deliver benefits for Queenslanders is the reforms aimed at improving road safety by increasing the deterrence effect of penalties for drink-driving. The Bill improves the deterrence effect of drink-driving penalties by including amendments which impose stricter road safety related criteria on drink-driving offenders who wish to apply for a restricted provisional licence in place of an automatic period of licence suspension. The proposed amendments arose from the 1997 Road Safety Summit, which is an annual forum with major road safety stakeholders on road safety issues of concern to Government and the community. These new criteria, which are in addition to the current requirements, will allow for consistent decision making in courts against clear and equitable road safety criteria.

The fourth area where the Bill will deliver benefits for Queenslanders are those reforms to small but critical elements of Queensland Transport road use management. Firstly, the Bill establishes new

employment criteria for school crossing supervisors by imposing a mandatory requirement for disclosure of any criminal history of a disqualifying offence which is also contained in the Bill. This will deliver benefits for school communities concerned about the safety of schoolchildren under the care of crossing supervisors and help Queensland Transport to improve the effectiveness of its employment practices for school crossing supervisors.

Secondly, the Bill provides a mechanism to improve the management of parking on private property to replace wheel clamping, which was banned in December 1997. This new scheme will allow for the control of vehicle parking and provide a deterrence to trespassing vehicles on private property.

In summary, the Road Transport Reform Bill is a major package of road transport reforms which will deliver substantial benefits for all Queenslanders both now and into the next millennium. I commend the Bill to the House.
