



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Heavy Vehicle Safety

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads)(10.08 a.m.), by leave: Heavy vehicle safety is an important issue. It is important for bus and truck drivers, who should be provided with a safe working environment, it is important for all road users that we minimise the risk of heavy vehicle accidents and it is important for the Queensland economy that we continue to have a safe and efficient road freight industry. Over the past five years, there has been a 44% reduction in heavy vehicle related fatalities. Given the significant increases in population, freight haulage and traffic on our roads, this reduction has contributed enormously to increased road safety and saved lives.

However, there is no room for complacency in road safety matters. Following a spate of heavy vehicle crashes in July, Queensland Transport called a road safety action meeting to ensure that recent gains were not lost. The meeting was held two weeks ago with representatives of the heavy vehicle owners, the Transport Workers Union, drivers, police, the RACQ and the Department of Main Roads. They recommended a series of actions, which I have asked Queensland Transport to consider and to report back to me. These include—

- addressing working conditions, inappropriate management and economic pressures put on drivers by enacting legislation with appropriate penalties;
- increasing vehicle safety standards;
- improving road conditions on freight haulage routes;
- improving driver education and training of all car and truck drivers;
- investigating drug testing options for heavy vehicle drivers;
- increasing public awareness of how to share the road more safely with heavy vehicles; and
- improving industry awareness of safety regulations and new initiatives.

An important part of any reform process must be to address the chain of responsibility by ensuring that not just drivers but heavy vehicle operators and owners also play their part in heavy vehicle safety. The Road Transport Reform Bill currently before the House will assist in this regard, but we will continue to work for improvements in safety.

After the truck accident at the Montpelier Street roundabout, a number of people made calls for the removal of trucks from the city centre. These calls ignore the reality that trucks need to go into the city because of the depots, businesses and industries that they service in that area. It is for this reason that calls to remove the tolls on the Gateway Bridge as a solution to the problems of traffic in the city are simplistic. We need solutions, not knee-jerk responses.

Members may be aware of work being done by Queensland Transport and the Department of Main Roads to further increase the safety of heavy vehicle routes, particularly those for dangerous goods vehicles. In southern Brisbane, the departments have determined that Mt Gravatt-Capalaba and Kessels Roads should cease being a dangerous goods route. This decision was only made following the active representation on this issue on behalf of their respective constituents' views by my colleagues the members for Mansfield, Archerfield and Mount Gravatt. The member for Mansfield has, I must say, worked tirelessly on this issue, seeking a rational and fair solution to the issue of heavy vehicle traffic on the Mt Gravatt-Capalaba and Kessels Roads.

As part of finding that solution, the Department of Main Roads has recently initiated a truck origin and destination survey. The results of that survey will provide information that will assist in determining the appropriate action to be taken on this issue. The considerable lowering of the road toll in 1998 can be attributed to the efforts of a wide range of road safety professionals, including heavy vehicle drivers, and those efforts are continuing. Those drivers and operators who are striving to work safely deserve our commendation. Those drivers and operators who flout the rules should be aware that the Beattie Government will take all appropriate action to ensure a safe and efficient heavy vehicle industry.
