



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 2 March 1999

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (5.20 p.m.): Yesterday, Monday, 1 March 1999, the 50 km/h local speed limit was introduced in south-east Queensland, marking one of the most important road safety developments in recent years. The new limit is being introduced to save lives and reduce crashes.

The 50 km/h local speed limit will apply in the local governments of Brisbane City, Caboolture Shire, Caloundra City, Gold Coast City, Ipswich City, Logan City, Maroochy Shire, Noosa Shire, Pine Rivers Shire, Redcliffe City and Redland Shire. The 50 km/h local limit will apply to most local streets in south-east Queensland. Local streets are those which are used mainly to access homes and private property and carry only neighbourhood traffic. The 50 km/h local streets will not have speed limit signs, but all roads with a speed limit of 60 km/h or above will be clearly signed. Some 50 km/h signs will be seen on roads in areas such as shopping and commercial precincts where a 50 km/h speed limit is appropriate due to the high risk of pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle conflict.

The 50 km/h local limit will apply in the same way as the current built-up area speed limit of 60 km/h, which means motorists must drive no faster than 50 km/h in built-up areas unless they have seen a speed limit sign stating otherwise. Motorists entering south-east Queensland will be notified of the 50 km/h limit by perimeter signs, while reminder signs in specific locations throughout south-east Queensland will reinforce this message.

The 50 km/h limit is the second stage of the State Government's Speed Management Strategy. Stage 1 included the introduction of speed cameras to State Government-controlled roads on 1 May 1997. The 50 km/h local speed limit is the result of a number of years of research, planning and development and has been a cooperative effort between Queensland Transport, Queensland police, local governments, Main Roads, RACQ, other key stakeholders and the community.

The reason for introducing a 50 km/h local limit is clear: 50 km/h is a more appropriate speed for local streets. Local streets are a challenging environment, with the unexpected movements of other road users. Local streets can be a volatile mix of the unexpected and short reaction times as drivers often have a restricted view. In terms of stopping distance, every single kilometre per hour can affect whether a crash happens and, if so, how severe it might be. A car travelling at 60 km/h stops some additional 12 to 16 metres after a car braking from 50 km/h. With 30% of all crashes and 25% of all fatalities occurring on local streets, it is vital we address road safety in these areas.

While the human cost of speeding is high, it is also expensive. Crashes on local streets cost up to \$150m in south-east Queensland each year in hospital and health-care costs, lost productivity in the workplace and the use of emergency services. In terms of how we compare internationally, Australia's urban speed limit of 60 km/h is high compared to that of most other developed countries. International experience has shown a reduced local limit cuts the number and severity of crashes.

A \$1.75m public education campaign is being implemented to explain why the limit is being introduced and what motorists need to do to obey the limit. As part of that campaign, a 50 km/h local speed limit brochure has been delivered to all households in south-east Queensland. The brochure explains how the new limit will work in detail and features a map displaying all roads which have a speed limit of 60 km/h or above in the Brisbane/Ipswich, Gold Coast or Sunshine Coast areas.

The 50 km/h local limit will be primarily enforced by Queensland Police Service Laser Infra-red Detection and Ranging devices, or LIDAR, and conventional radar. To allow motorists to adjust to the

new limit, an amnesty applies until 1 June. Motorists found exceeding the speed limit in 50 km/h speed zones—unsigned or signed—to a minor degree will be warned and issued with a brochure explaining the 50 km/h initiative. All other roads, which will be signed at 40 km/h, 60 km/h, 70 km/h or above, will not have an amnesty. The amnesty will not be allowed to become a free-for-all for motorists who speed excessively or drive recklessly. Motorists travelling at a dangerous or excessive speed will continue to be prosecuted.

Any motorist can be picked up. Even Ministers can be picked up, as the former Treasurer has found. Even the Minister for Transport can be picked up for speeding. The message is that, with the amount of police enforcement detection devices that are out there, if people speed it is not a matter of if it will happen but when. The message is not just to get the motorists to pay the fine but to slow down, and that has certainly happened.

The new speed limit is a major road safety step for Queensland. Over the past few years, motorists in this State have demonstrated their determination to reduce the road toll. Since its announcement late last year, the 50 km/h local speed limit has received support from motorists who are willing to slow down to prevent crashes. Now the new limit has been introduced, I am confident the number of crashes on local streets will reduce, while local communities will become more pleasant areas in which to live.

When we came to Government, the Government's first priority was determined as jobs and job security, and it continues to be that way. This Government is delivering on this commitment, especially in our relationship with Queensland Rail. When this Government was elected, one of its commitments in relation to Queensland Rail was to reduce the use of fixed-term employment contracts in Queensland Rail where it was more appropriate to grant permanent employment. Under the last Government, approximately 1,300 Queensland Rail positions had been allowed to become fixed-term positions. This was more than was necessary and contributed to a climate of job insecurity. In the first six months of this Government, 582 fixed-term employees in Queensland Rail were converted to permanent employment.

Fixed-term employment has a place in Queensland Rail if used appropriately, but it should not be used as a substitute for secure, permanent employment. Before Christmas, my office initiated further discussions between rail unions and Queensland Rail management regarding the conversion of further fixed-term employees to permanent employment. Last Friday, 26 February 1999, an in-principle agreement was reached which will see approximately a further 150 fixed-term employees made permanent. Under this agreement, Queensland Rail has given a commitment to limit the use of fixed-term employees to legitimate temporary situations and only in situations where permanent employment is not consistent with business needs. Queensland Rail will declare fixed-term positions permanent where the work can be projected as being a permanent need and has undertaken to continue to ensure the integrity of fixed-term employment practices by monitoring its use within work units.

Rail unions have agreed to take a number of key changes to the previous principles of fixed-term employment to their membership for consideration. These include a maximum period of fixed-term employment of two years, with permanency available if either the purpose of the fixed-term position is planned to extend for more than two years or if the actual engagement of a worker extends beyond two years. These agreements are now subject to discussion between rail unions and their members.

As I said, the new arrangements will result in approximately 150 existing fixed-term workers being given permanent employment in Queensland Rail. The agreements further entrench progress toward this Government's 5% jobs target. The ACTU and rail unions agree that it will deliver in full this Government's commitment to Queensland Rail employees to convert as many fixed-term employees to permanent employment as possible.

But members of the House should not just take my word for it. They should take it from a Queensland Rail employee who wrote to me on 8 January 1999. The letter is from a chap by the name of Julian Morgans, who states—

"As a one time 'fixed term employee' of Queensland Rail, I would like to thank you (and your Government) for your efforts in having as many as possible of these positions made into permanent ones. I have been advised by QR that my position at Pring Locomotive Depot has now been made permanent. You and your Government's position of employing apprentices and reducing excessive overtime within QR to encourage more employment is to be congratulated.

Having a secure job is the best Christmas present that my family and myself could have received. Many thanks."

To Julian, to all those people in QR and to all Queenslanders out there, this Government's commitment to jobs and jobs security will continue unabated throughout the term of the Government.