



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (4.34 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill because it affords me the opportunity to speak on a number of issues in the Bill which are important to my electorate. The areas that I will be covering refer to maritime matters and public transport.

Before addressing some of the details of the legislation, I would like to bring to the attention of the House a concept that I have been promoting for Mooloolaba Harbour for some time. I believe that the good management of the harbour would be enhanced if some sort of harbour authority or management advisory committee was formed to reach consensus on a number of management issues that currently reside in various State Government departments and in the two contiguous local government councils. Responsibility for many of these issues is shared by EPA, DPI (Fisheries), Queensland Transport (Maritime Section), the Water Police, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Emergency Services and various departments of the two councils.

I have raised this issue on previous occasions with two—perhaps three—previous Ministers. Hope springs eternal that perhaps one day we might have such an authority or advisory committee operating at the Mooloolaba Harbour on the Sunshine Coast. I understand that such a system is currently operating on the Gold Coast. I have not seen any reports on its operation, but if it is functioning well perhaps it could be emulated at Mooloolaba. If it can be shown that the Gold Coast system can be improved, Mooloolaba could take advantage of the Gold Coast experience.

Recently, I was able to host a forum at the University of the Sunshine Coast to address a number of environmental concerns in relation to the Mooloolah River and the Mooloolaba Harbour. This was an opportunity for organisations to share their knowledge of the programs they were running. This is an indication of the value of having a university on the Sunshine Coast. The university has been in place for some five years and a year or two ago it received its independence. One is not able to run programs of this type without having the advantage of a local university. The University of the Sunshine Coast is of great benefit to the people of the Sunshine Coast. The university's officers are able to undertake programs of this type.

In excess of 30 people, including the Mayor of Maroochy Shire, Councillor Don Culley, attended the forum. In excess of 20 individual organisations, Government departments and local government councils were represented at the forum. I would like to thank all involved for their interest, for their time and for their input.

Presentations were delivered by the Water Quality Management Committee's Trevor Lloyd, the Catchment Coordinating Association's Chris Greaves, the Sunshine Coast Environment Council's Peter James, the Mooloolah River Water Watch's Jan Kesby, John Carlton from the Maroochy Shire Council and Tony O'Keefe from the Caloundra City Council. The discussion was chaired by Professor Alan Sheehy of the university. A number of issues were raised, including but not restricted to such things as fuel spillage in the harbour. This is a matter which was addressed a couple of years ago and I am pleased to say that we now have a plan in place. The plan has been put together by the officers of the Department of Transport. It is hoped that we do not have to rely on the plan too often, but it is comforting to know that it is there.

Other matters raised at the forum included: concern for the riparian zone of the river; water turbidity; the recent fish kill—and unfortunately there was no definite finding as to the cause of the fish kill, whether it was water flow, brine in the river, litter in the river or effluent discharge; and this is an interesting one because it not only referred to human effluent discharge but animal faeces which run into the river and the harbour from the nearby banks, footpaths and boat ramps— sedimentation in the river and the harbour; the effect of acid sulfate soils; stormwater run-off; vessel configuration; monitoring of the situation; education of people involved in using the harbour and the river; compliance; and, unfortunately, enforcement.

A number of recommendations were framed, notwithstanding that the time allocated for such a wide-ranging discussion limited their full development on the day. These will be followed up by the chairman and relevant attendees at the forum. As the local State member, I have the responsibility of bringing some of these issues forward when opportunities such as today present themselves. However, prior to that I would like to reiterate the value of having local groups with a common interest meeting to address local issues with local solutions.

The Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995 was a valiant effort to address serious marine pollution issues. I spoke at some length on that Bill and raised a number of concerns. I will not repeat those concerns here today. Numerous consultations have occurred since 1995 in an effort to find practical solutions to some of the problems. I recognise the necessity for the amendments before the House today.

In relation to the holding tanks for effluent on vessels, there are structural and application problems to consider and also two other major issues. One is the provision of adequate pump-out facilities for boats when they come into harbour. The other is the issue of education, monitoring and enforcement of non-discharge regulations in enclosed and in-shore waters. This enforcement must be ruthless. Unless there are pump-out facilities in the various harbours where boats come in, there is always the inclination of boat users to pump out their tanks. They have gone to the trouble of putting effluent in the tank and if there are not good facilities into which they can pump that out, there is a chance that it would be pumped out into the wrong places. It is very important to have those pump-out facilities in place in line with the enforcement of regulations concerning holding tanks in vessels.

Having said that, it would appear from some of the evidence put forward at our forum that a number of other pollution sources are not so generally recognised. These include oil-dribble pollution and dog faeces, to which I referred earlier, from roads, footpaths and foreshores. Recent studies have shown that a lot of the oil pollution that is found in waterways is actually not coming from boats at all. Quite a significant proportion of that pollution is from oil off our roads and boat ramps that runs down gutters, into stormwater drains and then into our harbours. That pollution is seen by river and harbour users and beach users and immediately vessels get blamed for it. This study points out that it is not always the vessels that are to blame for this pollution; quite often it is the fault of shore-bound people and vehicles.

There is a potential problem with live-aboards on vessels that must be addressed. I recall my colleague from Noosa talked about the potential problems with live-aboards on vessels. The Noosa River in his electorate has problems similar to those experienced on the Mooloolah River with live-aboards. It is a difficult problem that needs to be addressed and it demands the cooperation of a number of agencies.

I note that the matter of fuel spillage is addressed in the amendment, and I support that. Previously in this House and elsewhere I have spoken about oil spillage, not only of a small nature in rivers and harbours but also massive spills, which is always a possibility— and I hope a remote possibility—off our very good beaches in Queensland and, more particularly, the Great Barrier Reef. If there was a bad spill in that area it could be quite a catastrophe, both from an environmental perspective and from an economic and tourism perspective. It could be quite a disaster.

Although litter in our waterways may not be covered specifically in these amendments, it is a serious environmental issue and of concern particularly to outboard motor operations. A plastic bag wrapped around an outboard motor water inlet can destroy an outboard motor in a very short space of time. Unfortunately, these plastic bags are often bait bags that other fishermen have thrown over the side. One cannot fail to be quite dismayed that one fisherman will cause the distress of another by such thoughtless actions. This issue may need to be addressed substantially by local government, but Main Roads could be involved in this issue as it relates to areas near our waterways. I have had it brought to my attention that plastic bags blow out of supermarkets, out of trailers going to the dump, and out of utilities and builders' trucks. They fall onto the roads and then they are blown into the river. I had not been aware of this problem until recently. I have been driving around the coast and actually looking at our roads. It is surprising how many plastic bags one sees.

Mr Bredhauer: I am pleased you're looking at the road while you're driving around.

Mr LAMING: Yes, of course, because a lot of these plastic bags are actually on the road. Perhaps the Minister knows of some programs that are currently in place with Main Roads or

Queensland Transport to address this litter problem. These days, I think that most people do not throw rubbish out of cars like they used to 20 or 30 years ago. In that regard, I think that we have progressed, probably because of the education program that is conducted in schools. I do not think that people litter as much as they used to do some years ago, and that is good.

Earlier I referred to live-aboards on craft on our rivers and harbours. That is of great concern to most navigable waterways. The Mooloolah River is no exception. I understand that a management plan is being formulated that relies on the legislation that is currently before the House. I look forward to being involved in that management plan. At the risk of sounding repetitive, I suggest that this is just the sort of issue that a local advisory committee could well have addressed and, if such a committee is put together, it could perhaps address it in the future. The problem experienced in a local community is always a little bit different from a problem experienced in another area. One of the things with State Government legislation is that, in most instances, it applies to the whole State. What could be a problem with waterways management in Noosa could be quite different from a problem with waterways management in Mooloolah, and quite different again from waterways problems on the Gold Coast, in Townsville or in Cairns.

Mr Roberts: Or Nudgee.

Mr LAMING: I heard the member for Sandgate talking about the cruising yacht club in his electorate. It is a fine yacht club, too. That club is located on Cabbage Tree Creek, and it seems to do a good job in looking after that waterway. I have sailed into that waterway, and I can say that that club looks after people very well.

Mr Roberts: The Brisbane City Council put a great fishing platform in the airport floodway.

Mr LAMING: That is very good.

Another practice that I have witnessed occasionally is of commercial carpet cleaners discharging their cleaning effluent into gutters that run straight into stormwater drains and then into the river. I will be referring this particular activity to the relevant council. I am just not sure which particular by-law this practice infringes, but I am sure that the EPA would be very interested in it. It would be of interest to Queensland Transport and also to councils to know about effluent flowing from stormwater drains into rivers, because it is probably an activity carried out by a registered business within a council area. Although that is a minor issue, we should pick it up because all of these actions contribute to pollution in our waterways. There are many other associated issues that would be well addressed by the type of committee that I have suggested, such as marine speed limits, moorings, anchoring, dredging and the occasional conflicts between commercial, recreational and residential interests in and around our waterways.

I would also like to make some mention of some aspects of the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act, which this Bill also amends. We on the Sunshine Coast are about to see our bus service contract reviewed. I think that it is reviewed every five years. Our Sunshine Coast bus service is undoubtedly better than what we had years before the current contract was let. That is only to be expected, because since that time the population on the Sunshine Coast has grown tremendously.

Our local Queensland Transport operations manager, Bruce Jackson, and his staff have worked very hard to get the best possible service out of the current contract. Bruce has always been very approachable if there are problems and he has kept us informed of what is happening. Only last week I had a meeting with him with a view to looking at ways in which the current contract can be improved. Recently, I had the opportunity to request that a number of areas receive consideration for enhanced services in the new contract. In an area such as the Sunshine Coast, there are always pockets that are not as populated as others and in those areas it is difficult to sustain a bus service. It is like the old chicken and egg syndrome: if we do not have an enhanced bus service, the people will not use it; if the public transport is not there, the people cannot use it at all. We need to get the operators of that bus service to make the investment and service some of those areas which are currently not serviced fully, and then have a promotion of the public transport system.

Some of the areas that I refer to include Buderim Pines, Point Cartwright Drive, the Palms at Kawana, Amarina Avenue and Goonawarra Drive at Mooloolaba, Headland Park at Alexandra Headland and the town of Mooloolah itself. I remember when the contract system came in—I think the member for Ipswich was the then Transport Minister—I made the remark that it was going to be very important to advertise public transport so that more people used it. The more the people use it, the better the services the operator can put in. It is cyclical. Advertising and promotion of available services is an area which needs enhancement by the company on the Sunshine Coast. I am sure those issues will be addressed. I look forward to an even better public transport service on the Sunshine Coast.

In the minutes remaining, I would like to mention an issue on which I have received correspondence and answers to questions on notice from the Minister: the upgrading of the Sunshine Motorway. I know it is a bone of contention to those opposite because of the abolition of tolls on the Sunshine Motorway. The Minister has referred to the abolition of tolls as though that affects what

enhancements the Government can make to the Sunshine Motorway. That is a rather unfortunate and unfair response to make to people who deserve—

Mr Bredhauer: No, it affects our budgets to the tune of \$17m a year over the next 12 years.

Mr LAMING: I am aware of that, but there is a requirement on people of all regions to provide a reasonable transport system.

Mr Bredhauer: It is not just the Sunshine Coast that is affected; it is the whole State's road budget that is affected.

Mr LAMING: I know the whole State is affected, but the Sunshine Coast is similarly affected when taxpayers fund works all over the State. I will not debate whether the Sunshine Motorway should or should not be a toll road, because I have only two minutes remaining. I believe people in all areas of this State—Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, northern regions, including the Minister's electorate, and western regions—deserve the best roads we can provide. I do not believe the debate on whether or not to have toll roads should be taken into account.
