



Speech by

SHAUN NELSON

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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TRANSPORT [BUSWAY AND LIGHT RAIL] AMENDMENT BILL

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (12.43 p.m.): Although I do not live in Brisbane City and I represent an area that is a long way from it, I wish to take a moment to speak on this Bill, because I am a huge supporter of public transport, even though in my electorate public transport consists of one Hiace bus that goes to Cairns twice a day.

Melbourne has one of the best public transport systems in Australia. It owes most of its public transport success to its amazing tram system. Any honourable member who has been to Melbourne would know that after getting a tram from the city one can then travel by bus or rail anywhere within Melbourne or Victoria, basically. Public transport has helped Melbourne to maintain its pre-eminent position as the cultural capital of this country and the shopping centre of the nation. A lot of my family members live in Melbourne and I have stayed there at times. It owes its reputation entirely to its public transport network. One can hop on a tram anywhere in the city—

Mr Bredhauer: What's wrong with shopping in Brisbane?

Mr NELSON: The Minister has drawn me to my point. As a member of Parliament, I travel to Brisbane regularly. When I am here the only way I can get around is either by hiring a car, walking or using public transport. As I said, I am a country person and I am not used to travelling on public transport. When I first saw the plans for a light rail or tram system up and down George Street and through the CBD, I thought it would be fantastic, because it would save my walking to the shops that I like going to at the end of George Street. I believe a light rail project in the city would be fantastic. At the moment I use the ferry service to travel to and from South Bank. It would be great to link light rail with services to the suburbs.

I am very confused about what is going on with the whole system, even though I have read the second-reading speech and the Bill. A lot of people in the Brisbane City area have asked me what is going on. I am sure that all is as it should be and that the Minister will enlighten us in due course.

The other question that I wish to ask and which has been raised with me by people in Brisbane City is why the busways cannot be used by taxis. I might stand to be corrected; I am not sure whether taxis can use them. I use taxis a lot when I am in Brisbane. I believe they are just as important to our public transport system as are buses. In some cases, bus or rail timetables do not meet our needs and we need to be able to jump into a taxi and get to where we are going very quickly. In some cities in the world taxis are about the only form of vehicle transport allowed into CBDs. For example, I think in New York City the CBD has been closed to private transport, with only taxis and buses being permitted. One question I would like to put to the Minister is: has any thought been given to taxis using the busways and, if not, why not? That question has been put to me on numerous occasions.

Having said that, I wish to speak also about the rail link from the airport to the city. In my opinion, this is an excellent idea, because it links the airport with our major public transport infrastructure, the Brisbane Cityrail network. I am not aware of what is proposed, but thought will have to be given to timetabling—and this is a point that has been raised with me by people in Brisbane who look into these sorts of things—to make sure that flight and train schedules correspond. I am told that in Sydney, for example, flight and train scheduling does not match and there are massive queues.

Mr Bredhauer: There will be trains every 15 minutes.

Mr NELSON: As I said, I am not 100% aware of what is going on. I am just relating the concerns that have been raised with me.

Public transport works. As the member for Mansfield quite rightly raised, public transport works when people are guaranteed that they can step up, hop on a train and get where they need to go. Scheduling is very important, especially for people who work or have work commitments in the city and live in the outer suburbs. They need a guaranteed form of transport so that they are not late for work or appointments and so that they can travel from point to point. That is the most important thing of all. If trams run—and, as I said, the trams in Melbourne are a perfect example of this—on a continuous loop so that, as the Minister just said, there is basically a tram, bus or train every 15 minutes, people can schedule their timetable around that, and that is a good thing.

Having said that, I would like to put my support behind this project. Having said that as well, I would now like to see it happen and I am sure that a lot of other people out there would as well. When these things become big issues in the media or when people start talking about them, people then start making plans around them. They might say, "If we are going to have a light rail network in the near future, I will be able to use it to do this and that." Businesspeople start looking into it as well. I for one am interested to know how long we will have to wait for this to happen. How long will it be before people in Brisbane City are catching trams again? What sort of time frame is envisaged now, given all the things that have happened in the past? What sort of time frame is envisaged now and into the future as to when we can start using these facilities? I hope that the Minister will be able to answer those questions.
