



Speech by

DIANNE REILLY

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Hansard 27 November 2001

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (8.58 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2001. This bill brings in primarily technical amendments that are aimed at improving public transport and road safety. The busways amendment and, indeed, the busways related projects are fine examples of this government's commitment to improve public transport and to increase access to public transport.

There is no doubting the importance of public transport and its obvious benefits to the community, both socially and environmentally. Transport is an essential component of modern, independent living linking home, work, facilities and community services. As a Gold Coast hinterland member, I represent an area in which residents rely largely on private transport—the motor vehicle. Although that may be the choice of many, for many others there is no other option. The nature of the electorate has been in the main rural and rural acreage, making it difficult to service efficiently with public transport, buses being unable to meet the varied demand of users spread out over a wide area. In the areas of Mudgeeraba, Tallai, Bonogin and Worongary, services that were operated in past years were withdrawn owing to poor patronage. However, in recent years, growth and development in the electorate, particularly in the hinterland suburbs just west of the Pacific Highway—those that I have mentioned already—has been enormous. As the urban sprawl spreads west, these areas will see even more residential development of the suburban and dense housing type and, consequently, further population growth.

Public transport services west of the highway into Nerang and Mudgeeraba are limited in both journey and frequency and are non-existent past the Mudgeeraba Shopping Village. Isolated townships and small communities such as Springbrook, Lower Beechmont and the Numinbah Valley are at risk of shrinking or disappearing—or at least losing their founding members and older residents as those people face becoming prisoners in their own homes. Many elderly residents of these isolated communities are left with no option but to move closer to health and community services once they can no longer drive. That is a tragedy not just for them but for their community, their neighbours and their friends.

In some of these areas the lack of public transport has been an issue brought to my attention since I was nominated as a candidate. It is continually raised at community and school meetings and in my meetings with constituents and through regular correspondence and phone calls to my office. The proliferation of new housing estates in the Gold Coast hinterland offering new homes at budget prices has made the dream of home ownership a reality for many young families and retirees. Rental properties are also more readily available and affordable in areas that fringe the main town centres of the Gold Coast. Ironically, those areas, by virtue of their affordable housing, also have high numbers of people who are transport disadvantaged because they are on low incomes, they are women, they are elderly, they are people with disabilities, or they are young people. In fact, most of the people moving into these quite affordable housing estates, some of which include quite dense unit accommodation, are young people and young families or older people retiring on the Gold Coast. They are the people who need public transport the most.

The Gold Coast hinterland from Coomera in the north to the border is one of the fastest-growing regions in the fastest-growing city in Australia. Therefore, I am convinced that things have changed significantly enough since the last extended bus services were run—and were then at that time found to be not viable—to try again. That is why one of my first actions since being elected was to raise these

issues with the Minister for Transport and to meet with officers of the department to seek better outcomes for the residents of Mudgeeraba.

I am grateful for the minister's support, concern and advice and have since embarked on a public transport survey designed to identify the real demand for public transport in this area. I wanted to know just who wants more buses, why they want to travel, where they want to travel, and when. The survey has been advertised and promoted widely and distributed through schools and community groups and service clubs and it has also been letterbox dropped to some 5,000 residents. So far, of the 5,000 surveys distributed over 150 have been returned. Not surprisingly, the majority of people responding to the survey are young people and the elderly—young people who are wanting to access work opportunities, leisure or vocational education, and elderly residents who want access to shops, medical centres and their friends and family across the Gold Coast.

The Nerang Community Centre has put in a submission identifying a lack of public transport as being directly linked to youth delinquency issues as young people are unable to access leisure activities, vocational education and training, and work. This is especially an issue on the Gold Coast with the nature of the Gold Coast's work force. Most young people are employed in the hospitality or retail industries, which are highly casualised and involve shiftwork, making it virtually impossible for many workers to rely on public transport to get to and from work.

I know that this survey will provide some clear evidence of increased demand. Indeed, it is already starting to show such results. I hope to use this information to convince the operators contracted to service the region, Surfside Buslines, to begin some extended services in the areas that show increased demand and to do this sooner rather than later, even if on a trial basis just to see how things go. It will then be up to the community, of course, to provide the patronage to keep these services viable. I will be doing everything that I can to encourage my residents to use these services if they indeed appear.

I will also continue to lobby for additional support or subsidy from all levels of government to achieve an improved service outcome. I know that there are enormous demands state-wide on the transport budget. I also know that we have an indifferent federal government that would rather focus on leaky boats than real support for desperately need infrastructure for regional communities. I have asked before in this House and I will ask it again: where is the federal government support for regional communities when it comes to the Gold Coast, especially the Gold Coast hinterland?

Mr Bredhauer interjected.

Mrs REILLY: Yes. That is my point. The federal government's approach to the Gold Coast and its public transport issues in particular is to talk big and deliver little. The members for Moncrieff and McPherson have been deathly silent since their big announcements before the election about securing funding for light rail, all \$65 million of it. I say: show me the money, not just for the Gold Coast light rail but for other desperately needed infrastructure projects and for public transport in the Gold Coast hinterland and, in fact, for the Tugun bypass, which they now suggest that we put a toll on because they want to renege on their duties.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to working closely with Surfside Buslines and with Queensland Transport to improve public transport in my electorate and for the people of Mudgeeraba.
