



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

Hansard 27 November 2001

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (6.11 p.m.): At the start of this debate I heard the member for Mansfield speak in glowing terms about the bus strategy in South Brisbane. There is no doubt that I support all of those thoughts expressed by the member, and I support the viewpoint of the integrated bus service and what is happening at Mount Gravatt. That is excellent.

The member for Mansfield mentioned 'the people of south-east Queensland'. An unfortunate situation has just developed—and the minister has been approached in relation to it—50 to 60 kilometres south of the area the member for Mansfield was speaking about. At Mount Tamborine, the subsidy for the bus service has been withdrawn to the only community bus service between Mount Tamborine and Beenleigh. I see the minister is shaking his head. I agree that it has not been withdrawn yet, but there has been notification that it will be withdrawn on 21 December.

I agree that there are two sides to the argument. A private bus operator from Logan Services originally owned this particular bus service and it has now been picked up by another private operator. I believe that perhaps something has gone wrong during the contact between the private operator and the Transport Department.

I say to the Minister that I believe that this particular commuter bus service subsidy should be reconsidered, even if it is only for six months, to allow the private operator and the Mount Tamborine community the opportunity to reassess the situation. At one time there were at least 40 to 50 people catching the bus from Mount Tamborine to Beenleigh and then continuing through into the city. I am not supporting the angle that the service should go from Beenleigh into the city on the busway because there is an excellent rail service now. There is only a need for a service for commuters from Mount Tamborine to Beenleigh. However, if this particular subsidy is withdrawn, there will be no community bus service from Mount Tamborine towards the city. There is a community bus service from Mount Tamborine towards the Gold Coast, but this will affect people who wish to travel north from Mount Tamborine.

The bus subsidy is being withdrawn and is to cease operation on 21 December. As a newspaper reported—

This will be a sad day for the many people between the mountain and Beenleigh who depend on this service for work, business, medical, shopping and leisure purposes.

I am aware of a particular individual at Mount Tamborine who at present has limited sight, who travels overseas and who uses this particular bus service to travel to Beenleigh. He then travels from Beenleigh straight to the airport. It is an excellent service. However, if it is reduced, obviously he will not have it available to him.

For some years the service has been supported by a State Transport Department subsidy and it is not viable without it. There is no doubt that it is not viable without it. There are not many people catching the 6 o'clock morning bus to Beenleigh. However, there is no doubt that the decisions of the previous operator were not conducive to the running of a decent bus service. There is also no doubt that the service was not advertised well or advertised on Mount Tamborine.

I believe that a period of six months should be allowed for consultation between the community of Mount Tamborine and the new bus operator as to how this particular service could be improved, and

I believe that the bus subsidy should remain for that particular period. For some years the service has been supported by a State Transport Department subsidy and it is not viable without it.

Recently the state government announced that it was removing the subsidy and, understandably, Logan Coaches have decided they can no longer afford to continue the service. I see the minister is shaking his head. If the minister does know something different—and there is no doubt that letters would have been received by the minister in the last week—then the minister in his summing-up might indicate exactly what is happening. I agree that at present this service is not self-supporting and there is no way it can continue without the subsidy.

There are a number of points which should be made. This is the only public transport to and from Beenleigh. If this particular bus service is withdrawn from Mount Tamborine, there is absolutely no way a person without a private vehicle can come north towards Brisbane. They can go to the Gold Coast, but they cannot come north towards Brisbane. Apart from residents using the service for the purposes already stated, some high school students leaving school late after extracurricular activities depend on it. Some residents on Tamborine mountain and along the bus route have no private transport and are entirely dependent on public transport. At a community meeting on the weekend, I heard some very sad cases of both younger and older people who are certainly very definite that unless this service is retained, they cannot continue to live where they are.

I have already said that without this service, the residents have no direct link with the recently constructed rail system to the Brisbane airport. That is particularly important for a retired university professor who travels overseas and is partially blind, who has continued to use this service for a very long period. The public transport needs of our large and growing number of retired residents will increase rather than decrease if they are to stay in their own homes and not become isolated. The alternative is to move to a larger centre, which most people hope to avoid.

The population of the Gold Coast and the hinterland is predicted to rise by one million over the next 20 years. To service this expanding population and to reduce road congestion, public transport needs to be increased, not reduced. I think most people who know this particular corridor around Beenleigh, Mount Tamborine and Logan Village would agree that those areas are growing very dramatically. If the economy worsens, more people will depend on public transport and will become isolated and excluded without it.

The state government's own integrated transport plan includes a service linking the Gold Coast and Beaudesert via Tamborine mountain. Is this to be ignored and Tamborine Mountain to be excluded from this plan? What these people are pointing out is the fact that they have access from the Gold Coast through to Tamborine Mountain, but they certainly do not have access to the northern part.

Some people are asking: is the government serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions? They are asking that the community come together in a consultative group and that the minister give them six months. Instead of cancelling the subsidy, the bus owner has agreed to look at this issue, to talk to the consultative group and to the Mount Tamborine residents, and to advertise this particular service. If the minister agrees at the end of six months that it is still not viable, I would agree that maybe then the subsidy should be withdrawn. However, there are very exceptional circumstances in this particular case.

I believe the previous owner did not advertise the bus service correctly and did not do the right thing by the residents of Mount Tamborine. As a result, the Transport Department has said, 'It's not viable. There are obviously not many people taking part in this particular service. Why continue the subsidy?' I would agree, if that is all the commuters we will have using this particular service. I ask the minister for consideration of a six-month period in which this consultation with the community can occur.
