



Speech by

Mr P. PURCELL

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard 30 May 2001

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (9.36 p.m.): I congratulate the minister on a great decision that he has made.

Mr Foley: Hear, hear! He's a great minister.

Mr PURCELL: He is a great minister. The decision relates to the Gateway Bridge in my electorate.

Mr Bredhauer: Only half of it.

Mr PURCELL: All of it is in my electorate. During peak hours some mornings and afternoons, because drivers have to stop to pay their tolls the South East Freeway becomes one long parking lot. What the minister is doing will turn that bridge into a freeway that flows. That is very important. Commerce from the south of Brisbane is held up in the morning, and from the north of Brisbane in the evening. There is a flow and ebb, to and fro. The bridge carries traffic to the port, which is becoming a very important commercial centre of Brisbane, and to the airport. So it is very important that this bridge does not restrict the flow of traffic north and south on the eastern side of Brisbane in my electorate. I am sure that the users of that bridge will thank the minister every day for making the traffic on the bridge flow a lot easier. I know that the minister and his department will be planning for a second bridge or second crossing in that area in the not-too-distant future.

Mr Bredhauer: It's happening now.

Mr PURCELL: I thank the Minister for that. It is very important to do that now because of the lead times. There are many ways to pay for that bridge—not off the bottom line of our budget—and it will certainly help the commerce in those two hubs—the airport and the port of Brisbane—which are growing at very rapid rates. So we need to keep that traffic flowing to and from those places. That traffic comes from all over Australia, but mainly from Sydney and Melbourne.

The port road will link in with this. The minister has worked very hard on that recently. We are two or three years away from having that port road operational. They are preloading and looking at planning for that port road at the moment. It will be very important, particularly for suburbs like mine that are on the fringe of those areas. The traffic runs through my electorate to the port and to the airport. We will be able to keep the heavy transport trucks from Sydney and Melbourne off our suburban roads.

Once that port road is built, we will be able to provide designated heavy vehicle roads from the Ipswich freeway onto the Logan freeway and the South East Freeway to the port, the airport or wherever their freight is going. We cannot hinder those heavy transport trucks. The traffic lights between Lytton Road and the port at the moment allow something like only four trucks to pass through before they change from green to red. So trucks on the South East Freeway trying to reach the port can be banked up right to Wynnum Road. The reality is that the last truck goes through on the red light. We need to get the port road built so that there will be no traffic lights to hinder the travel of trucks from the Ipswich motorway right through to the port. This project is very important because it will take traffic off our suburban roads.

My next suggestion may be a bit radical. I think we need to think beyond e-tolling. In cases where Queensland Rail competes with private companies for business, particularly in the minerals province in central Queensland, there should be a charge levied on heavy transport trucks, which have a capacity up to 750 horsepower and which may drag seven dogs behind a power pack. These vehicles are almost like a train on the road. They travel on roads that are not meant to carry this sort of heavy transport. These operators believe they have a right to drive those heavy trucks on our roads, and they chop the roads to pieces.

In our competitive world, I believe we should be charging those heavy transport operators for the use of those roads. Queensland Rail had to bid against these companies to determine who would carry minerals to the Mount Isa smelter and other centres. The bids submitted by the trucking companies did not include the cost to the community in keeping those roads open and in a good state of repair. However, Queensland Rail has to build and maintain the railway tracks and maintain and run its engines. It was a very close-call tender. Queensland Rail just missed out on the contract. However, it was not a fair comparison.

In such situations it is impossible to compare apples with apples because the cost of building, maintaining and improving the road was met by the taxpayer, whereas Queensland Rail carried all the costs for the rail infrastructure and maintenance. In this competitive world of ours, the minister should consider going that one step further and implementing as level a playing field as possible. Such contracts should be loaded up on the side of the trucking companies with their fair share of the cost of travelling on those roads.

I know that Queensland Transport has conducted tests and placed weighing instruments underneath the culverts on those roads. It was discovered that many of the heavy transport vehicles that use the roads are 100 per cent plus overloaded.

Mr Rowell: They get fined.

Mr PURCELL: They do not get fined because they do not get caught. The member for Hinchinbrook is wrong. They should be getting caught, stopped and fined because they are chopping our roads to pieces. If a truck runs on unsealed roads in wet weather, it destroys the road for our country cousins for however long it takes to get our graders back out there and repair it. That is wrong. I know there is a problem with getting inspectors out into some of those areas. The trucking industry seems to have a very good network and learns when our inspectors will be in those areas with scales to weigh vehicles. We need to pay particular attention to this matter so that the cost of repairing and maintaining those roads does not blow out. I am not a person who is on the side of the establishment all the time, but the abuse of these roads by a small minority removes funding which would enable repairs to be undertaken on other country roads.

I congratulate the minister on the work he is doing in my electorate with e-toll. I am sure that its introduction will make crossing from north Brisbane to south Brisbane that much easier, and it will save industry millions upon millions of dollars.
