



Speech by

Hon. STEVE BREDHAUER

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard 30 May 2001

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. S. D. BREDHAUER (Cook—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads) (9.53 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate this evening. As is usual with the passage of transport bills through the parliament, the debates tend to be wide ranging. That gives people an opportunity to put on the record a number of issues related to the bill, no matter how loosely.

Firstly, I will address a couple of the issues that were raised by the member for Gregory in his contribution today. Essentially, the member for Gregory would like me to respond to four issues specifically. First and foremost was the administration charge. If a person goes through the e-toll booth or plaza without having a transponder, a digital camera will take a photo of their number plate. They will be subsequently sent a notice to pay the toll and an administration charge. The member for Gregory was concerned about the level of the administration charge and the fact that it may affect the public acceptance of the new system.

At this stage, we have not finished refining the level of the administration charge. The member indicated that he thought it would be in the range of \$10 to \$20. I would hope—but I cannot commit myself now—that we would narrow it down to between \$10 and \$15. In other states, that is the order of magnitude of the administration charge. I can give an assurance to the member for Gregory that the administration charge is by no means a revenue raising exercise. It will only cover the cost of the administration of sending a notice to the person to notify them that they have gone through the toll plaza without paying the toll and asking them to remit that toll. I give a commitment to the member for Gregory that we will charge no more for the administration fee than is necessary for us to properly administer the system. I think that it will be in the range of \$10 to \$15.

We also need to bear in mind that there are a range of other provisions that we have in place for people who may be unfamiliar with the system, including an amnesty for a period so that notices will not be sent in the first instance. We are very conscious of that issue. I appreciate the concerns that have been expressed by the member for Gregory and members of the opposition. I would be happy to keep him informed as that matter progresses and we get to the stage of setting the charge. We appreciate that, whilst there will be significant benefits to motorists, and particularly commercial users, of the Gateway Bridge and our other toll roads from the e-toll system, price sensitivity is quite an important issue.

The second issue that the member raised was the level of the fine. It needs to be borne in mind that it is not actually a fine for not paying the toll. If people go through the tollway without paying, we notify them that they have been through the tollway, that they did not have a transponder in place and that they are required to remit the toll plus the administration charge. In the first instance, no-one gets a fine. If one goes through without a transponder, all one has to do is pay the toll and the administration charge. There is no fine. The fine only comes into effect when, having been notified that they have not paid the toll, the person refuses to pay the toll or says that they were not driving the car and refuses to assist in identifying the person who may have been driving the car at the time. In essence, it is not a fine for not paying the toll.

We will actually go to the trouble of writing to the registered owner of the vehicle, alerting them to the fact that their vehicle has gone through the booth without a transponder and that they have a

responsibility to pay the toll and the administration charge. If they continue to ignore their responsibility after that, the fine comes into play.

The fine in Queensland is \$105 and in Victoria it is \$100. As a comparison, the fine for a person boarding a train without a valid ticket is \$150. I do not think that the \$105 fine is unreasonable given that we will be writing individually to each motorist who goes through without a transponder, saying, 'If you pay the \$2.20 toll plus the \$13 fee, that is, \$15.20, that is fine. We will take that and it is all over and done with.' Everybody is happy. It is only when they refuse to pay that the fine comes into effect.

There will be warning signs advising motorists who are approaching the tollway of the new system. We anticipate launching a significant advertising campaign. In fact, members may have already seen articles in the newspapers from Terry Brown at QML, alerting people to the change that is coming. As the member alluded to, there will be variable message signs on the approaches to the toll. We will do whatever we can to alert motorists to the fact that the transponder system is operating in particular lanes.

However, there is a concern, as the member would appreciate as a former Minister for Transport and Minister for Main Roads, in terms of signage policy in that we need to make sure that we do not have so many signs that they are a distraction to motorists. There is a safety consideration there. Within the limits of those safety considerations I give the member for Gregory an assurance that we will do whatever we can to notify motorists.

Mr Johnson: It can be confusing.

Mr BREDHAUER: Particularly to people from out of town. People who use it every day know what the signs say and what lane they should be in. But people who have just driven down from Longreach and who have never been across the Gateway before can find the variable message signs and approach signs quite confusing. In the past when I have been to Sydney and tried get into the right lane to go across the harbour bridge I have had that problem.

The other very important issue raised by the members for Gregory and Hinchinbrook is the interoperability of the electronic tolling systems here in Queensland with those operating in other states. The Australian Transport Council has come to a national agreement to work towards the interoperability of our tolling systems. We have made sure that the e-toll system that we have put in place in Queensland complies with those national standards and will be interoperable with similar electronic tolling systems that operate in other states, namely, New South Wales and Victoria, at present. Commercial users and the heavy vehicle industry in particular who are regularly travelling across interstate boundaries will find the systems compatible. As the member for Toowoomba North said, the system operates both in the sense that people can prepay on the transponder so that they have a credit or, alternatively, regular users of the system can operate under an account system. Those were the key issues that the member was looking for us to address.

I mention briefly the contributions from the members for Algester and Mansfield. Both members, in conjunction with the members for Mount Gravatt and Stretton, have been very active in lobbying me about the problems on Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and the traffic impacts on the local community. They are very concerned that the motorways operate as efficiently as possible. Efficient motorway operation encourages heavy vehicles in particular to use the motorway. Cost is a factor for them, but so is convenience and time.

Mr Johnson: It depends on the location of commercial businesses, too. Down in that region they are all over the place.

Mr BREDHAUER: That is a valid point. At the initiation of the member for Mansfield, we did an origin and destination survey of heavy vehicles on that road. Seventy per cent of the vehicles using Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road have either their origin or destination in that area—places like the Rocklea Markets and so on. It is very difficult to divert those. But for those heavy vehicles that have a choice, if we can make the operation of the motorways more efficient and timely, that is a factor in their making a decision to use those rather than the more congested roads like Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road.

The member for Mansfield in particular and I, and also the members for Algester, Mount Gravatt and Stretton, have been campaigning for a planning study to come up with a long-term solution. There is no quick fix or short-term solution. We need to look at the long-term solution to those issues. I am pleased that the Deputy Prime Minister and federal Minister for Transport has come on board and allocated money for the planning study that we have been pushing for for probably 12 months now since we first approached him. We think it is an important issue in terms of the long-time amenity of that community and also making the movement of heavy vehicles in particular through that part of the National Highway network as efficient as it can be.

I am pleased to note that John Anderson has helped us with the funding for that project. However, I do note that the member for Moreton, who I have to say has never made a positive contribution in terms of helping to resolve these issues with me as minister—he is a regular critic of me and the actions of this government—has never once written to me to ask for any assistance or support,

other than to whinge. Also, he basically denied the need for the study, saying that all we had to do was to declare that a section of the National Highway did not exist and make it a state-controlled road—something which would presumably sort out the problem. That is absolute nonsense. It is never going to happen. It is part of the National Highway. It is primarily the Commonwealth's responsibility. But I, as the state minister, and the state local members are prepared to play our part to try to solve that problem. I notice he came out in the newspaper this week supporting it. I welcome his belated support. I just wish he had done so a little sooner, because we might have made progress a bit earlier.

I appreciate the contribution of the member for Toowoomba North and the issues that he raised. The member for Hinchinbrook spoke all about the roads in his electorate, particularly the National Highway. The member for Toowoomba North resisted the temptation to talk about National Highway issues in his electorate. I think we might leave that for another debate. He should rest assured that I am well versed on those issues; the member for Toowoomba North has already beaten a path to my door to talk about the second Toowoomba range crossing and various other issues up there.

With the Gateway Bridge in his electorate, the member for Bulimba is fully cognisant of the congestion that occurs on the Gateway Bridge generally as a result of people having to stop to pay tolls. He more than any other honourable member would appreciate the benefits that will come from improving traffic flow as a result of the new e-toll system. I appreciate the contribution that he made, because the relationship between the Gateway, the motorway system and the new port motorway will deliver major benefits to the freight industry in particular.

A number of other members made contributions on a range of issues that are not specifically related to the bill so I will not respond to those in any detail. But I do appreciate the sentiments they made. I know they are genuinely representing the interests of their constituents and that those issues are important to them as local members and to their constituents. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.
