



Speech by

**Mr T. MALONE**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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Hansard 27 November 2001

### **TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (6.48 p.m.): It is with real pleasure that I rise to support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill as my electorate covers quite a bit of road infrastructure in Queensland. My electorate starts at The Caves on the highway and goes right through to Farleigh, which is about 10 kilometres north of Mackay. It covers quite a distance of the Peak Downs Highway that emanates from Mackay and moves out towards the coal mines.

Quite a number of issues come to mind in speaking to the bill. In my electorate we face some very difficult times in terms of accidents on the highway and in maintaining the highway. One of the real issues we face concerns the little town of Walkerston which is on the Peak Downs Highway.

Walkerston is growing in size very considerably. Over the years as the highway has moved directly through the township of Walkerston the transport of fuel and machinery to the mines is becoming very dangerous. Around about 20 B-doubles filled with fuel move through the town every day and the school basically fronts the highway. As a result, it is becoming quite dangerous. Going back 25 or 30 years ago when Tom Newbery was the member for Mirani there was a move to bypass the highway around Walkerston. At the moment we have moved no closer to that bypass. I am advocating as strongly as I can to have a corridor built which ensures that the traffic moves away from Walkerston. A bypass is needed in the future to ensure that Walkerston remains a safe township. There also needs to be safe and direct access into east and south Mackay where industries have been established as a secondary support for the mining industry.

There are quite a number of issues relating to the section of the highway between The Caves and Mackay. It covers an area which is frequently highlighted on the news because there have been accidents. There have been a lot of single-vehicle accidents in the Marlborough-St Lawrence area, many of which are almost unexplainable. The police assume that most of the accidents are either fatigue or alcohol related or the result of boredom. Even though it is very hard to deal with those situations, there are major accidents on that road on a daily basis. My view is that we need to use audible lines on the edge of the road. That is a real lifesaver, particularly when drivers become fatigued. There is also a need to look at different strategies in dealing with fatigue along that section of road, which is about halfway between Brisbane and Cairns. Many people drive that route and at that section move into the fatigue zone. We need to look at ways to help drivers get through that section of road without accident. I certainly do not have the answers to the problem. It is disheartening to see good drivers have disastrous accidents on that road. As I said, we need to look at special means of overcoming that problem.

The legislation before the House gives me an opportunity to speak about some of the issues relevant to my electorate. One of those issues is signposting, particularly in the Pioneer Valley area. It is a tourist destination. Many tourists travel by car along the coast. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of signage on the highway to indicate the attractions available off the highway. It is important for the minister, through the department, to canvass the views of the people. I am sure that a great deal is done to highlight the tourist destinations along the coast or just inland from the highway. The Pioneer Valley-Finch Hatton Gorge area springs to mind, as does the national park at Eungella and the new national park at Homevale. They are great places to visit and it is good to encourage tourism into the electorate and into Mackay. Mackay is desperately looking for some means of supporting a tourist-

based industry in order to help out the local economy. Main Roads in conjunction with local councils can do a lot to ensure that tourists are aware of the excellent attractions on offer off the main highway.

There are a few other issues I want to raise. New work has been done on the Walkerston-Eungella Road, which is a main road. The work done was excellent, but there is a problem because houses are reasonably close to the road. People turning into those houses have to slow down in order to turn from the main road into their properties. The Branscombe Road turn-off from the Eungella Road has created quite a problem. I have spoken to the local engineers. They are looking at widening the road to allow cars continuing straight to go around those cars that are turning. However, it is disappointing that during the engineering design stage no consideration was given to that situation. I hope to work with those people in that area to try to overcome that problem as quickly as possible.

Members would recollect that the old highway used to come down the Sarina Range. The old highway still supports the transport needs of a thriving cattle industry inland from Mackay. For many cattle producers, the closest access to the abattoir or saleyards is down the Sarina Range. Even though there was a time when B-doubles were allowed down the Sarina Range, that has now been stopped. I have been trying for quite some time to have B-doubles allowed to resume using the Sarina Range. It is a huge saving for cattle transport. The only other route is to come up the Marlborough Road, head back out to the Peak Downs Highway, come down through Eton, back through Walkerston and then directly to the abattoir at Bakers Creek. That increases the distance to be travelled by up to 75 kilometres and it becomes a fairly expensive exercise. Main Roads has devised a way of allowing B-doubles down the range which would involve some type of signposting consisting of lights to show if there was a B-double already on the range either coming down or going up to prevent two B-doubles crossing the range at the same time. That could be an option and it is worth looking at.

In relation to the road to the national park at Eungella, there has been a problem of late with larger buses getting up there. It is important that the transport needs of the tourist industry are met. If a bus load of tourists heading to Eungella cannot get there, it becomes quite a problem. There is some work being done. Hopefully, that will overcome that problem. There are also another couple of black spots I want to mention before closing.

There have been quite a number of accidents at the Sandy Creek area about 10 or 15 kilometres south of Mackay. A service station has been established on the side of the road. There has been a problem with accessing that service station. As a result, quite a number of accidents have happened in that vicinity. I have talked to the department about looking at a type C intersection for access. Currently, the access is via a type B intersection. It certainly creates some problems. My understanding is that Main Roads is currently looking at that. Something needs to be done reasonably quickly so that as we move into the wet season there is less chance of an accident happening in that region. As I said, there have been quite a number of accidents already. We need to minimise the danger in that area.

Another place that is becoming quite a problem is the Hay Point turn-off from the Bruce Highway. Vehicles travelling south turning into Hay Point Road seem to either access that road at too high a speed or there is something wrong with the camber or the engineering on the corner. They hit the inside kerb, roll across the road and a number of them have ended up in Mr and Mrs Zelenka's yard, which is across the road, either upside down or badly damaged. That is creating quite a dangerous situation for the family living there.

Sitting suspended from 7.00 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

**Mr MALONE:** In conclusion, there are a couple of issues I want to raise. Members would recollect that in recent times there was a major failure in the transport of coal to Hay Point with the derailling of the coal train at Black Mountain. The report into that incident has just been released. It targets an O ring loose in the system which created a problem with a valve, resulting in the brakes being unable to fully engage. The incident caused \$20 million worth of damage. It cost \$600,000 to clean up and repair the track. It was a very expensive operation.

I have raised on a number of occasions the basic maintenance concerns regarding not only the track but also the workshop. I have spoken to the two drivers involved in this incident. Fortunately they were uninjured but they were certainly shaken by the incident, and they are very concerned about it.

**Mr Bredhauer:** Hang on. You can't attribute this to a maintenance problem.

**Mr MALONE:** I am not particularly attributing it to a maintenance problem. How the O ring dislodged or gained access to the inside of the system remains to be seen. The discussions I have had with people indicate that further testing needs to be done on the trains as they move through the workshop. There is a real problem with communications on the range, as the minister well knows. At certain times the loco controllers cannot talk to the crew at the back of the train because they lose contact. That did not seem to be the problem in this case. It was a systems failure.

In talking of the systems, there are two different air pressures in the system. There is a higher pressure and a lower pressure, and because of the O ring dislodged in the reduction valve, the higher

pressure was able to lift off the brakes. You can put it down to bad luck or whatever, but the fact of the matter is that it happened, and it could have been a hell of a lot worse. We could have lost a couple of people as a result of it or, worse still, if another train had been coming up the range empty it could have been a very expensive operation. More controls need to be put in place to ensure that those sorts of incidents do not happen. The cause of this incident has to be examined very closely. The crossing from Connors Range to the coastal plains is a steep descent. It is a really critical point of the coal train operation. This matter needs to be considered seriously.

The other issue is one that my colleague the member for Hinchinbrook raised. I refer to the crossing of the rail corridors for both the fast train and coal trains. Just north of Yukon, the coal train corridor crosses the north coast line as it moves to Hay Point. As more trains move onto that line and with the extent of the hold-ups at the occupational crossings, it is becoming evident that boom gates must be installed on these crossing. Farmers are being forced to contribute to the cost of boom gates. At this particular crossing that cost is around \$250,000. That is a huge cost for farmers to have to bear. With the upgrading of the coast rail corridor to accommodate the tilt train, I would assume that many of those crossings will require the installation of boom gates in any event. I hope that farmers and those who use those occupational crossings will not be put in a position where they have to contribute that sort of money to the upgrading of the crossing when it will ultimately be used by the fast train as well as the coal train. With those few comments, I conclude my remarks.

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