



Speech by

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Hansard 15 October 2003

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS [ROAD USE MANAGEMENT] AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (11.13 p.m.): Tonight I am pleased to rise to speak to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) and Another Act Amendment Bill. As has been explained by the shadow minister, the member for Gregory, this bill contains information and changes which will have an impact across-the-board. Nobody in this House is better qualified to talk about transport issues than the shadow minister. Some people have said that he has diesel in his veins and that sometimes he blows plenty of smoke. That may be the case. He comes from a well-respected family in the transport industry, and it will obviously be there for a long time to come.

It is important to get this issue right, because the transport industry is a major and essential industry. Transport across-the-board, whether rail or road, is essential to our wellbeing and the future of our country. Road transport has played a very important part in this regard since time began, as it will into the future. However, there is more that we can do. We have come a long way. I used to drive an old Mack truck and a trailer to take produce, whether wool or livestock, to markets such as Rocklea. I would unload it and then drive back again. Things have changed dramatically since those times. The rules of the road in those days would not be allowed today, and that is reasonable. We have progressed. We have come a long way and become more safety conscious. There are more speed limits, more conditions, more checks and balances, and there should be.

There has to be safety on the roads. We have to ensure that loads are safe, particularly when we hear of those tragic incidents of people travelling the road in all innocence and something falls off a truck and causes serious injury. That is just tragic. It would be the worst thing for any driver to know that maybe something they have not done or not checked falls off, whether it be a pipe a metre long or half a metre long, which might fall into the path of a car and hurt somebody. In days gone by cables, pipes and wires were used to tie down a load. Luckily, none of mine ever came off, but it could happen so easily. Today they use sling type winches to tie it down. They are so much better and more efficient, but when they get old they wear out and break. There are certainly ways to ensure that those things are safe and better than they were in days gone by. In terms of the bogie trucks that are used, inspections are better in a lot of ways.

That brings me to a point, and that is that the road transport inspection service is an absolute disaster. We can introduce all the legislation we like into this House, but it is not going to solve this problem in the transport industry. Presently, those people who operate trucks have great difficulty in getting machinery inspections done. I hope that the minister takes into consideration the plea that we are making, because there is a very serious situation building. People just cannot get their trucks inspected within a reasonable time. They can book ahead, but get caught interstate or rain can delay them. There are various reasons why they cannot make it to their set appointment.

I understand that even Dalby used to have a couple of inspectors but there are none there now. I am not even sure if there are any in Toowoomba. Sometimes those in the industry have to wait months to get a machinery inspection done and if they cannot meet that date for whatever reason they have to book it again for months later. Those people cannot afford to lose a day, two days or three days if they have a load, and they therefore cannot always be there for inspections at certain times. In days gone by there was a bit of give and take, but at least people had their machines inspected in a reasonable and practical way. Today it is totally impossible. It is a total disaster and there will be trucks on the road that are being driven without registration.

In fact, there are numerous instances of which I am aware where truck operators are cancelling their registration and reregistering just to get them on the road. That is crazy. I plead with the minister to make sure that that no longer happens. It should not. But the system is collapsing.

The explanatory notes state that the bill inserts provisions requiring a driver or another person to give information about an influencing person's role in an extended liability offence. That is often the only way to ensure that the root cause of offending behaviour in the heavy vehicle industry can be identified and enforcement action taken. We do not want cowboys on the road, but it is also very un-Australian to have dobbers. I am disappointed that that is the way the minister has to go with it, but I accept what the minister is trying to do. We have to make sure there are no cowboys out there. But I also do not think that we should encourage dobbing.

As the shadow minister said, there is a lot of detail in this bill and we will be supporting it. However, I would ask the minister to take note of my comments that we cannot get road transport inspections and we desperately need them.