



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Transport Safety

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.01 a.m.): The Transport portfolio in Queensland is at forefront of innovative science and technology initiatives, particularly when it comes to road safety. As the previous Minister for Innovation, I developed a strong interest in science and technology. There are many innovative uses of technology in the Transport and Main Roads portfolios.

In August, the Premier and I launched Queensland Road Safety Action Plan 2004-05, which is the first of four plans under safe4life, the Queensland road safety strategy 2004-2011. Our overall aim is to cut the crash fatality rate to 30 per cent by 2011. That would equal 5.6 deaths per 100,000 people. Our current rate is 8.19 deaths per 100,000 people. The good news is that that is a 22.7 per cent reduction since December 1997. That is a significantly bigger reduction than in New South Wales—in fact, about two times bigger. It is a fair bit better than Victoria's as well. We still have a long way to go particularly when it comes to rural roads and younger drivers. They are some of the key challenges we have.

The key action plan elements are investigating and potentially trialling new technologies to save Queensland lives. For example, seat belt interlock devices could prevent cars from starting unless seat belts are worn. Pupil movement tracking devices for fatigue could trigger in-vehicle alarms. It is very interesting when one goes to the simulator and sees where people's eyes are looking whilst they are driving along the road. Intelligent speed adaptation devices provide warnings or increased resistance on accelerator if one exceeds the speed limit. Safety is our biggest priority when it comes to my portfolios.

In July, Main Roads installed sensor technology on the Bruce Highway near Gin Gin to reduce heavy vehicle rollovers on a tight bend at the bottom of an incline on the southern approach to the town. Three major accidents have occurred on that bend involving heavy vehicles since 1999. Thankfully, there have not been any deaths. Sensors in the road trigger warning lights if the vehicle approaching the bend is longer than six metres—that is, trucks and cars towing caravans.

Queensland is also moving ahead with smart technology with the introduction of the new smart driver's licence and smart card for integrating ticketing. The smart driver's licence has the advantage of providing added security, added protection against fraud and added assistance for law enforcement agencies, particularly in this ugly world of terrorism. Features could include emergency contact details, secure online transactions with government; and credit card linked loyalty or reward points for buying low-cost goods and services if the holder wanted those. For the privacy of women we are looking at the ability not to have a woman's address on her driver's licence. That may be something women may not wish to have on it.

Mid next year, south-east Queensland public transport moves into new smart technology with the trial of smart card ticketing. We are rolling that out in Redcliffe in the second quarter of next year. Our geographical coverage will be one of the world's biggest systems with smart card readers across 1,500 buses, 143 rail stations and 20 ferries.

We are also committed to supporting those with disabilities. QR has completed the installation of hearing loop technology at 30 stations on the Traveltrain network. This delivers public announcement messages directly into passengers' hearing aids. By 2007, all Citytrain and Traveltrain stations will be fitted with hearing loops. The technology will also be progressively fitted on trains.

We are working very strongly with the University of Southern Queensland and Wagners Composite Fibre Technologies to develop bridge decks and girders from fibre composites. I have asked my department to work very closely with them on this exciting technology that is not only smart but also very environmentally sound. These initiatives show this government's strong commitment to enhancing transport operations and safety through cutting-edge technology and innovation.

I could not leave today without passing comment on the 50th birthday of the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. I know his parents, Evan and Bonnie Schwarten, very well. They are the most wonderful people you could come across. They are the greatest true believers. I suppose, Robert, one could say this, 'Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee til death.'