



Speech by

**Michael Caltabiano**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM**

**Mr CALTABIANO** (Chatsworth—Lib) (5.27 pm): I move—

That this government reverses the last eight years of neglect and offers Queenslanders a real public transport alternative with a safe, modern and efficient rail service as part of a fully integrated public transport system.

In the modern and progressive city that is Brisbane and the fastest-growing region of Australia that is south-east Queensland, we cannot survive without a public transport system that is fully integrated with a very strong rail component that is safe, modern and efficient. Unfortunately, in Queensland we do not have this service and after eight years of Labor government in Queensland there is no prospect of our getting this level of service any time in the future.

This Labor government needs to be judged on its performance over the last eight years in not providing a safe, modern and efficient rail service here in Queensland. It is important as we look to improve the patronage on our public transport system and encourage the mode shift from private motor vehicles to public transport that we acknowledge that rail plays its important part. Currently public transport has a seven per cent share of the travelling public market. That is in theory supposed to move to 14 per cent over the ensuing years. It is at a steady state today because of the poor performance of rail and patrons not taking up the opportunity to travel on rail.

So why are people not moving to the rail system? The statistics show us that last year, 2004-05, the growth in public transport patronage on our rail system was 0.96 per cent of one per cent whereas growth in our public transport patronage on our bus system was 10.5 per cent. For the first time in a very long time the number of people actually catching and using our bus system here in Brisbane exceeded the number of patrons using the Citytrain network by some five million trips in the year.

The figures out of Brisbane City Council show that for the 2005-06 year it is likely that the patronage growth on the bus network in Brisbane will be of the order of 12.5 per cent. The train network cannot possibly show that sort of level of improvement off a base of 0.96 of one per cent. So why is the patronage rate so very, very low? We are still waiting some four years after the announcement of smart card technology when millions of dollars of taxpayers' money has been invested in smart cards that have not appeared. It was supposed to be delivered but has been continually delayed and still not delivered by this government, which seems to be incapable of getting the technology right to deliver a smart card for public transport patrons.

Our train system is not regarded as a safe system for the community to use. Mums and dads want to know that their children are able to get access to a train system that has inspectors on board, has security at train stations for departure and security at train stations on arrival so that people can get on and off the train and out to their cars and to their homes with a high degree of safety. The move to a 24-hour train service, particularly for busy periods to get people out of the CBD of Brisbane and back to their homes, never eventuated. We see in today's *Courier-Mail* that the trains servicing our community right through the 24 hours not only did not eventuate but the 24-hour weekend trial, which was in fact one one-hour trial, is on the verge of being scrapped.

And why? Because of the industrial mayhem that is in Queensland Rail. We had the rail strike on Friday, 3 February which paralysed south-east Queensland and cost the business community millions of

dollars in lost productivity, caused enormous disruption to local residents and created chaos on our roads. And why? Because one union, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees, decided that it would order the 4,000 train drivers and guards to walk off the job. And so they did! There were no trains so that, when Queensland families sought to get about their business and use the rail system, nobody was able to do so because of the thug-like actions of this union. What did the Premier say at the time? He said—

As someone who's been in the Labor movement all my life—

and members can imagine him with his hand on his heart—

I just feel betrayed by what I think is a wild cat strike which has inconvenienced some Queenslanders.

We heard it again in the parliament today over the former member for Gaven where the Premier said that he feels betrayed. Well, it is about time the Premier stopped feeling sorry for himself and got on with the job of solving some of the problems he has created, investing in infrastructure for Queensland, investing in our rail system and making our system reliable for the people of Queensland, particularly those in the south-east corner. What did the editorial say about this strike action? What did the editorial say? It said that it was a blatant act of industrial thuggery. Who runs our rail system? Does the minister and his department run the rail system, or does the union official in charge of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees run our rail system? It is certainly the responsibility of the minister to act on behalf of all Queenslanders to ensure that we have a reliable public transport system. Wildcat strikes do not reinforce a reliable public transport system.

There have been eight years of promises that are undelivered, and we start with the promise to fund Queensland Transport. Over the last eight years funding in Queensland Transport has been a complete shambles under this government. When it came to government in 1998-99, it had an annual budget of \$1.165 billion a year. In 2001 the number had decreased to \$859 million. In 2002-03 it went down again to \$839 million. By last year it was back to \$1 billion. So seven years after those opposite came to office it had reached the same levels that the government inherited. How can services be provided to a growing community of 400,000-odd extra Queenslanders with a level of investment that is totally inadequate? It is an appalling story and it is little wonder that our rail system suffers terribly at the hands of this government.

Promises on the Gold Coast seem to be the order of the day with the Labor government. Right back to 2001 promises were made about the delivery of an efficient rail system on the Gold Coast. Right back to 2001—in fact, on 8 February 2001—the promise was made to deliver the now famous Tugun bypass. Right back to February 2001—almost five years ago—the government promised to deliver the Tugun bypass by 2002, a \$55 million project. What was also promised was to get the rail right down to Coolangatta. In 2001 the commitment was made. For eight years those opposite have been in government! In 2001 the government promised to get the rail to Coolangatta. The promise was that we would have an efficient rail network on the Gold Coast. So on 8 February 2001 we were going to get this system and the money was to be allocated to get the system. But what were we told then before the 2004 election? On 17 March 2003—just before the last election—we were told that public transport service improvements between Robina and the Gold Coast airport would form part of the state's extension to the Gold Coast passenger rail line from Robina. Mr Bredhauer—we all remember him; the worst transport and main roads minister in Queensland's history—said that the Gold Coast—

**Mr Quinn** interjected.

**Mr CALTABIANO:** The jury is out on the minister. The jury is out. He said—

The Gold Coast is one of the fastest growing regional areas and as its population grows, so too do the transport needs of the local residents.

That is a pretty accurate statement; yes, it is. But what he forgot to say was that there needs to be an increased level of investment to meet the growing needs of the population to satisfy those transport needs for local residents so they have access to a high-quality public transport system. The construction of the Tugun bypass was again a feature of the 2003 campaign. In March 2003 the cost of course had gone from \$55 million to \$240 million with an immediate start. Now it is \$540 million and still no start. So what are the implications for rail? In November 2003 we had the great announcement from the government—'Slashed waiting times and more trains in a \$247 million Gold Coast upgrade,' says Mr Beattie. He said—

The \$247 million upgrade will mean cuts in the gap between peak services from 30 minutes to as little as 15 minutes.

I went to the transport department timetables and fares. This is 2½ years and an election later after supposedly having spent \$247 million of taxpayers' money to slash peak service times from 30 minutes separation to 15 minutes. What do we have? The first train departs Robina at 5.22 am. Some 36 minutes later the second train departs, 26 minutes later the next one, 31 minutes the next, 25 minutes the next, 40 minutes the next and 44 minutes rounds out the peak. So where has the \$247 million gone to reduce the gaps between peak services? How can the people of the Gold Coast—who know that train service as the 'Bombay Express'—have a safe, efficient and reliable public transport system that is worthy of support when this government promises, promises, promises and fails to deliver year after year after year. The performance of this government in the management, operations and expansion of the rail network is nothing short of appalling. The long-suffering residents of south-east Queensland deserve a government that is not full of excuses.