



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Transit Authority

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.43 am): We are experiencing prosperous times. We have low unemployment, rapid industrial expansion and an economy that is growing at a rate that constantly outstrips the rest of Australia. Our state has never been more popular. Every day around an extra 200 people call Queensland home. This growth brings with it many opportunities. However, it also brings many challenges and, as I said earlier, we need to stay one step ahead of those challenges and we need to plan for the future. That is why when I was sworn in as Premier I committed my government to work harder to identify the pressure points in essential services and develop strategies to help to ease that pressure.

One key area that I committed to tackle was urban congestion here in the south-east corner. That is why today I am announcing a significant and serious shake-up of public transport services. Firstly, we will move to create a new stand-alone statutory authority that will coordinate and improve public transport services across south-east Queensland. This new authority will build on the work of TransLink but it will go much further. With this move we will create one authority to manage and coordinate the myriad 17 different bus, ferry and other public transport service providers that currently service the south-east corner—one authority to deal with customer needs and complaints, one authority to provide better and more efficient public transport services, one authority with real grunt to provide better coordination and integration of service.

Secondly, we will take Queensland Rail passenger services, incorporating the Citytrain and Traveltrain division, and structurally separate them from the rest of QR's operations. The new entity will have primary responsibility for delivering improved rail passenger services and ensuring a renewed customer service focus for our passengers. Its services will be contracted by the new transit authority. The focus of this new entity will be solely on passenger services, unlike current arrangements in which QR passenger services are just one part of a much larger organisation that incorporates other businesses such as freight and coal. This will allow the other parts of Queensland Rail to clearly delineate between their separate businesses and focus on their continued expansion into the national freight and coal markets. This is good news for rail passengers in the south-east corner; it is also good news for rail passengers all across Queensland. We will seek the input of south-east Queensland mayors, unions and service providers on the development of the new transit authority. After public consultation we expect to have the new authority up and running by July next year.

The current system relies on different operators in different areas to undertake their own scheduling. There is only minimal integration. Customers do not know where the buck stops because there is no single point of coordination and accountability. The authority will be one point of contact for timetables, complaints and feedback. It will also have the capacity to coordinate the deployment of buses, trains and ferries to meet peak demand in locations right across the region. It will be a one-stop shop that will provide better and improved services for customers. There is more to be done but we are about putting the customer—the passenger—at the heart of our public transport system. This new initiative will build on the work we

have already done to build a better public transport system here in south-east Queensland. We have allocated close to \$10 billion over the next 20 years to improve public transport infrastructure.

Within the region the government is spending more than \$950 million on bus, train and ferry services this year alone, and this year we are funding 148 buses which will deliver an extraordinary 5,000 extra services every week. Four years ago we created TransLink. Since then, TransLink has successfully implemented integrated ticketing, provided additional services including 500 new buses, and it is rolling out the smart card system. In that time patronage has grown by an extraordinary 30 per cent and trips have increased from 119 million per year to more than 160 million per annum.

Our growing population is putting pressure on our roads and our transport system. Urban congestion is bad for business, it is bad for the environment, and at the end of the day it robs commuters of precious time with their families. The new transit authority and the restructure of Queensland Rail will help us to meet the challenges of this growth. Public transport is not the only part of the solution to urban congestion but it is an absolutely critical part of getting it right. This is a major reform and it will deliver a simpler and more convenient system for passengers who should be at the heart of our public transport system.