



Speech by

Barbara Stone

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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TRANSPORT OPERATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (12.32 pm): It pleases me to rise to speak in support of the Transport Operations Legislation Amendment Bill which is before the House. This bill introduces important changes for the taxi industry—changes that will improve safety and security for patrons in key entertainment centres and improve services for residents in the Coolangatta-Tweed Heads border region.

I want to speak about the improvement in safety and security on taxi ranks. The amendments enable Queensland Transport to introduce a taxi industry security levy that will partially fund initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of taxi patrons and taxi drivers throughout Queensland. The key initiative in this bill is the provision of secure taxi ranks through supervision by rank marshals and security guards in Brisbane and regional entertainment precincts.

In November 2005 the government assumed funding responsibility from the Brisbane City Council for the six secure taxi ranks operating in Brisbane. As well as paying for marshals and guards at these ranks the government made further improvements to safety at these ranks. Long waiting times and queue jumping at unsupervised taxi ranks can certainly lead to problems and this is usually in the form of violence.

How quickly a great night out can be ruined by an unpleasant incident at a taxi rank or waiting for a long time at a taxi rank with a number of patrons engaging in antisocial behaviour. It certainly makes a great night turn into a very negative experience. Unfortunately, I have experienced unpleasant behaviour while waiting for a taxi late at night. It is a very scary experience. I certainly felt fearful at the time. It is something that we do not expect in our city or regional areas. Public safety is important to the entertainment districts and it is vital to the taxi industry. So I am pleased that more will be done to ensure safety at taxi ranks in the entertainment precincts in Brisbane and in regional areas.

I have received complaints about bad behaviour at the taxi ranks and complaints about patrons feeling unsafe while waiting for a taxi. These complaints have come not only from patrons but also from parents whose children frequent entertainment precincts, especially in the Brisbane area. Their kids are relying on taxis to get home. We have to realise that it was only a very short time ago that Logan received late night and early morning bus services. Safety at taxi ranks is very important to those in my electorate.

I have discussed safety at taxi ranks with the people in my electorate. They, like me, believe the provision of marshals and guards at taxi ranks reduces the level of risk of incidents occurring and increases the feeling of safety for patrons and taxi drivers. I know that the people in my electorate will welcome these initiatives. They will expect our busier late night ranks to introduce more of these safety measures. I have no doubt that these secure taxi ranks increase public confidence in using taxis as a viable late night transport option. This can only be a benefit for both patrons and the taxi industry.

I noted in the minister's second reading speech that the success of the 2005 Brisbane initiative has seen the introduction of another eight secure taxi ranks in key entertainment precincts in Queensland's regional centres, including the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, Cairns and Townsville. He also said, 'Given this achievement it is highly likely that more secure taxi ranks will be introduced in other regional cities in the future.'

Most of the complaints I have received about taxi ranks in my electorate related to the Logan Hyperdome piazza taxi rank. That is especially at closing time for the pubs in the area. Upon receiving a complaint I immediately contacted Senior Sergeant Scott Lacey at Loganholme Police Station. He informed me that during their normal proactive policing they had already established a relationship with the pubs in the area and that discussions were taking place with relevant stakeholders to work on a solution that would benefit patrons, the pubs and the restaurants in the area, as well as the taxi industry.

I also met with Yellow Cabs general manager, Bill Parker, marketing assistant, Darryl Briais, and marketing manager, Mal Hartley, to discuss this problem. They too were very concerned about the situation. They were concerned for the patrons and their drivers. I thank them for their assistance in this matter. I have continued to meet regularly with these gentlemen and I am pleased to say that we have had some good outcomes for the electorate. One of them is a taxi phone installed at the Springwood bus station. I thank them for their assistance in that regard as well. I have also had discussions with Grant Brady, the former centre manager of the Logan Hyperdome, who assisted in trying to solve this problem.

So we went from having no control methods at this taxi rank to today having the Hyperdome Centre Management, Gilhooley's—the pub situated in the piazza—and local police working together to try to ensure a better situation for patrons and taxi drivers. Hopefully this will translate into more people going into the piazza and having the confidence to use taxis to get home. This will be good for the Logan economy and good for local jobs.

I thank the Loganholme police and the hyperdome police beat officers, under the leadership of Senior Sergeant Scott Lacey, for being proactive and working to ensure safety at the taxi rank. I certainly want to see more secure taxi ranks. I certainly want to see what the minister outlined in his second reading speech occur. I know that I will be pushing for this particular taxi rank in my electorate to become a secure taxi rank. The hyperdome piazza is the major entertainment area in Logan. It has many entertainment places for families and those who like to party late at night. It is also a popular area for young people to socialise. Without the piazza in Logan the people of Logan would have to travel to Brisbane or the Gold Coast for late night entertainment. It is very important that safety is assured at this particular taxi rank.

I also want to take this opportunity to mention an innovative passenger transport service called NightLink, which was introduced into Brisbane in 2005. NightLink moves people out of the nightclub areas quickly by providing more frequent taxis, bus and train services on Friday and Saturday nights from midnight to 5 am. I inform the House, and particularly the minister, of the feedback that I have had from young people in my area regarding this initiative. I am happy to say that it has been very positive. They really love knowing this bus service is available to them. They have told me that it is now the only public transport service they use after a good night out in the Fortitude Valley entertainment precinct.

I was also informed that an incident occurred during one of their trips home and that the bus driver pulled over and the incident was dealt with in the appropriate manner. The young man who told me this story said that while this did cause delay to those travelling on the bus they were very pleased that it was handled in the manner it was because it sent a very clear message: bad behaviour is not acceptable on this service and that commuters can feel safe. He informed me that he certainly will be continuing to use this service. I am sure it will not be long before I will be calling for more NightLink services to Logan.

I do not support the use of police officers being used as taxi rank marshals as the member for Bundaberg would like. I think they could be better utilised in our community. What I do support is police officers getting in with the community and with businesses to work on local solutions to ensure there are smooth operations and to ensure public safety at taxi ranks.

While it is important to note that a levy will be introduced to support these security initiatives, it is also important to note that the levy only provides money to partially fund the cost of providing secure taxi ranks. In fact, it is probably only about 55 per cent. The government will continue to fund the remainder of the program. I am very pleased the government is continuing to do this, because I certainly want to see these important security initiatives continue and grow throughout the state. I commend the bill to the House.