



Speech by

Barbara Stone

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (7.30 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak briefly tonight on the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2007, firstly on the adoption of national compliance and enforcement reforms for heavy vehicles. The reforms are designed to improve compliance with, and enforcement of, heavy vehicle operating requirements by adopting the third reform package developed by the National Transport Commission. One very important aim of these reforms is to improve road safety. Research shows that heavy vehicles are overrepresented in crashes causing fatalities. In a state as large as Queensland and in a country like Australia, road transport will continue to play a dominant role in freight movement. So it is therefore extremely important that we have responsible legislation to ensure road safety and better occupational workplace health and safety to continue the viability of the industry.

Some of the reforms include provisions that are aimed at ensuring that all parties within the chain of responsibility who influence the behaviour of drivers are held accountable for breaches of road transport laws. It is important to know that Queensland has led the way with regard to the chain of responsibility legislation. Since the introduction of these laws, there has been a drop in the number of heavy vehicle crashes causing fatalities and I hope that this continues. It should also be noted that Queensland has seen some high-profile successful prosecutions in recent times. This can only be a good thing for the industry as it weeds out those not having the respect for their drivers' safety, for public safety or for competitive equity. Industry equity will also be improved with the new mass, dimension and loading requirements being adopted consistently across the nation. The bill incorporates a risk based class of offences covering the areas of mass, dimension and load restraint with penalties in proportion to the risk to public safety. The bill will also expand on existing chain of responsibility provisions with regard to providing false or misleading information. The bill will also introduce new sanctions such as the commercial benefits penalty. This is a penalty to deter financial incentives to commit breaches of heavy vehicle laws in relation to high-value cargoes.

The industry wants to know that it is playing on an even playing field with the necessary penalties that will deter those cowboys in its industry from doing the wrong thing. The public wants legislation that also has the necessary penalties to deter those doing the wrong thing in the industry. It wants to see legislation that will make our roads safer. This is extremely important legislation to all of us. I welcome any initiative that improves road safety and, in particular, improves road safety in relation to the heavy vehicle industry.

Secondly, I speak with regard to the amendments that aim to improve the taxi and limousine industries to enhance the range of services available in Queensland. There is no doubt that when we talk to taxi users a consistent complaint is the long queues and waiting times, especially on Friday and Saturday nights and also during major events. For my constituents it is even more relevant when we consider that we do not have access to the special buses for footy games or other major sporting events; we have to drive up to Brisbane to access these special buses. I want to bring to the notice of the new minister, who is in the House tonight, that I think the Springwood bus station and the Logan Hyperdome bus station are two ideal locations that could have special sporting event buses running, and I encourage him to investigate this matter.

This bill will provide for peak demand taxis. These extra taxis will be managed through taxi companies to reduce waiting times and alleviate the pressure that can build up due to long queues and wait times at cab ranks during peak times. Flexibility is the key to meeting the challenges of peak demand services, and this bill provides that flexibility. Indy and Magic Millions on the Gold Coast are certainly events that come to mind where this extra service will be very useful. My only concern with this is the difficulty in obtaining drivers. Just like other industries around the state and, indeed, the country, securing staff can be a challenge for many employers, and I believe the taxi industry is no different. While this may be a challenge, I would hope that the taxi industry will ensure adequate training is given to drivers. Having confidence in a taxidriver is very important to taxi users. Having confidence in them to drive safely is extremely important. Taxi customers, especially tourists, want to have the confidence that drivers have the knowledge of the city or regional areas and that they know major tourist destinations. As the member for Toowoomba South said earlier, often that first point of contact for visitors to our state or country is with taxidrivers. When we do have a bad experience with the taxidriver, it certainly does leave a lasting impression on us and what we think about that city or that destination. We must ensure it is a good experience. I would encourage the taxi industry to make sure that the standard of training is kept to a high level.

I also ask for assurance that there will be a high standard for the appropriateness of the driver. I know that many young women are concerned for their personal safety. But it is not just waiting at cab ranks at night; they are also concerned about who the driver actually is when they hop into a cab by themselves late at night. I do ask that we keep this quality high on their list when they are recruiting taxidrivers. They should know that selecting drivers who are appropriate to the position is very important to their users. While I can see a great benefit from this new taxi permit, I can also see some difficulties that may occur. However, I am sure this can be worked through by the industry. I believe this new permit is necessary to give the industry the flexibility it needs to meet those peak demands.

I turn now to a new category of limousine services and provision for a greater choice of vehicles that can be used for weddings, school formals, graduation ceremonies and a whole other range of social events as well as tourist services. When I talk with students preparing for their school formal they often raise with me the type of car they are going to be arriving in. For them it is part of the overall experience. For some it is a very important part of the overall experience. Choosing a car for a school formal or a wedding is a very exciting time in their life. It is such an exciting and important time that they are not thinking about whether the driver has the appropriate skills or whether the car meets a certain maintenance safety standard. So it is important we do have safeguards in place.

I can see how those limousine drivers who obtain appropriate insurance, maintain their vehicle and ensure other operational costs are paid in a legitimate business would be at such a disadvantage if privately owned prestige vehicles or owners of novelty vehicles were to take on the role of chauffeur and charge fees. So I am pleased to see that the bill before the House addresses both the safety of special purpose limousines and the inequities that currently exist in the industry.

I want to thank the Taxi Council and the taxi and limousine drivers in my area for keeping me up to date with issues in their industry and for working cooperatively with the government to improve the taxi industry for owners, drivers and customers. I want to congratulate the former minister, the now Deputy Premier, for bringing the bill forward. Transport plays a key role in my electorate. Being halfway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, Springwood is a rapidly growing area and so transport is very significant to my constituents. I am looking forward to working with the new minister to keep improving transport services for the people of Springwood. I commend the bill to the House.