



Speech by
Gary Fenlon

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 9 October 2007

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. I am particularly interested in the reforms to the limousine industry that are contained in this omnibus bill. In some respects the bill is very much underpinned by the need to protect the public, certainly in terms of guaranteeing the safety of individuals who step into various modes of publicly available transport. In a more general sense, it ensures that the use of those vehicles does not create problems at taxi ranks and other places such as congestion or disputes over their supply. Therefore, the bill is very important in terms of public interest.

Amendments contained in the bill introduce several critical reforms to improve service delivery in the limousine industry. The amendments will create a new category of limousine, special purpose limousines, and will require general purpose limousine operators to maintain electronic records of bookings. These changes are a significant step aimed at achieving a customer-responsive service that meets the community needs in a changing marketplace. Included in the amendments are changes to enable greater flexibility for operators, recognising the special nature of some of their services. Whole of Queensland limousine licences currently cost about \$130,000. The availability of licences across Queensland is carefully controlled to ensure the security of the investment made by operators. Often that is a very important investment for operators as it is their superannuation; it is their investment in their future and their income for the rest of their lives.

However, a small part of the industry does not want to provide conventional limousine services. Those operators usually have one or two privately owned classic vehicles, for example, a 1927 Model A Ford or a 1930s Hupmobile, which are magnificent vehicles. Often the expense of purchasing and maintaining those vehicles means that the operators themselves place limits on the type of work that they will do. The vehicles are usually reserved for specific purposes, such as weddings and school formals. Those limits place obvious restrictions on the return that operators can generate and rule out a conventional limousine licence as the cost simply cannot be recovered.

Queensland Transport is aware of instances where such vehicles have been used to provide chauffeur driven services for a fee. This activity is illegal as those services should only be provided by an appropriately licensed and accredited vehicle. That illegal behaviour does not provide a sufficient safeguard for the travelling public. The service provider does not have the appropriate insurance. Consequently, those types of services do not provide any form of safety net for the customer in the case of an accident, nor does the driver meet a minimum level of competence and accreditation. Exposing the general public to this level of risk is clearly unacceptable.

That said, the government does recognise that there is a middle ground to enable those types of operators. The bill creates a special purpose limousine licence which is a new category of limousine licence. SPLs will provide a service especially for weddings, formals and tourist services. Vehicles will have a minimum age of 30 years, clearly distinguishing them from conventional commercial limousines. Licences will be leased on an annual basis for a set fee of \$2,000. SPLs will provide the public with a greater choice of vehicle operations for very special occasions. In addition, this allows owners of special,

unique and older vehicles to enter a market previously not available to them. Once the changes to the legislation are implemented, special purpose limousines will provide Queensland customers with the confidence that the vehicle and the services meet a minimum recognised performance standard, while giving them the opportunity to share in the experience of driving in those classic cars.

The bill also addresses another side of the limousine industry, which is touting and plying for hire. That practice has seen some limousine operators engaging in unfair practices in direct competition with the taxi industry. That is unfair because limousine operators do not pay the same price for licences as taxidriviers and operators. The practice also directly conflicts with how it is intended that those two industries operate. Limousines are required to operate under a prebooking arrangement and can only stand in approved locations waiting for work. Most such limousine ranks operate on the Gold Coast.

The bill will make it a requirement for limousine operators to have an electronic recording as evidence of pre-booking for services. Present limousine service licence conditions do not require limousine operators to keep a record of a prior booking. While limousine operators must only provide services to customers who have pre-booked their journey, it is currently difficult to determine if a pre-booking exists. This anomaly has enabled unscrupulous operators to ply for hire—that is, approach customers directly offering transport services.

This reform will require limousine operators, when not at an approved rank, to record pre-bookings for services on an electronic passenger booking recording system. This system will allow departmental officers to quickly confirm the existence of a prior booking and enable more effective compliance with the regulations governing the operation of limousine services. This initiative will reduce the instances of limousine drivers and operators acting illegally by making it easier for Queensland Transport inspectors to detect when illegal activity has occurred. This reform will improve the integrity of the limousine industry in Queensland.

It is worth noting that the requirement for an electronic passenger recording system does not apply to SPL licences. For these licences, either paper or electronic booking recording systems are considered appropriate. This option recognises the part-time nature of SPLs. This bill will provide the basis for implementing new improved limousine services across Queensland and I certainly welcome the introduction of the taxi and limousine reform package of initiatives delivered by this bill. I commend the previous minister for transport, the Hon. Paul Lucas, and the current minister for their good work in bringing this important piece of legislation before the House.