



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (4.12 pm): I rise to speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to share a story with the House which demonstrates why the amendments contained within this Transport Legislation Amendment Bill, which amends the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, are so necessary. It is about some young people of my acquaintance; in fact, many are friends of mine. We have had dinner parties. A few Saturday nights ago these young people were having a gathering in Burleigh Heads. They were enjoying some champagne and conversation until about 10 pm. They are twenty-somethings and they decided to head into Surfers Paradise for a dance. One of the group contacted Regent Taxis to order a taxi, while another poured another round of drinks. At 10.30 pm they rang again and were assured their order was a priority. At 11 pm—still waiting—they rang again and were told a taxi was on its way. By midnight when their taxi had not yet arrived they decided to take the risk and drive.

These were not young teenagers deliberately flouting the law or rebelling against the system. They are responsible, professional, respected members of the community who were simply sick of waiting for a taxi. Thankfully, they arrived at their destination safely and left the vehicle in a car park overnight when they left in the early hours of the morning. Again, faced with the trouble of waiting in line for a taxi, as often happens in the middle of Surfers, they walked to a nearby hotel and called a taxi from reception. The point is that for many the temptation to drive home from Surfers early that next morning would have been too strong. That is why incredible numbers of people are still being caught by the DUI laws. People cannot believe it is happening but it is happening because of frustration and the lack of public transport options. I know that has been addressed relatively recently by initiatives that the former minister has brought in and the new minister is overseeing. They are welcome, but more needs to be done in this regard.

This is just one tale which illustrates the problem with public and passenger transport in Queensland, particularly around the party precincts on a Friday and Saturday night. One of the elements of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill seeks to ease the demand for taxi and limousine services by allowing extra taxis to be provided during peak times. Part 5 of the bill seeks to introduce a new section 67A into the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 that mandates taxi services put in place a peak demand management plan. The peak demand management plan outlines strategies for managing the demand for taxi services during peak patronage periods. Section 67A(3) details what should be in place, including the number of extra taxis commissioned for peak periods; particulars of the days and times of peak demand services; strategies to inform taxidriviers, service operators and the local community about the program; as well as an organisational structure identifying persons responsible for the achievement of the management plan objectives.

I note that the bill provides a penalty against people who administer taxi services who do not have such a plan in place. Fines of up to \$3,000 can be imposed against those who fail to adhere to the regulation contained in the bill. I think it is time to start enforcing standards against taxi providers. They are in the business of providing transport. Sound business practice suggests that when there is increased demand they need increased services. Among the benefits of having more taxis available and more

affordable transport options is that, as I have said before, it will help reduce the number of drink drivers on our roads.

I would like to deviate on this point for just a moment, though it is still relevant to the topic of better taxi and passenger transport services. Drink driving is a real problem, not just on the Gold Coast but throughout Queensland and the rest of Australia. We can increase the penalties, which I note this legislation achieves by mandating cumulative sentences rather than concurrent sentences, carry out more random breath tests or even just carry out legitimate ones and educate drivers. However, at the end of the day there are still too many people taking the risk.

While we should continue to crack down on drivers who so blatantly break the law from a police and legislative perspective, we need to start looking at why people continue to drive drunk in spite of their better judgement. This is why I think in addition to cracking down on drink drivers and introducing legislation such as this, which will ease the pressure on existing transport services and increase the availability of such services, we should be looking into why there has been no real reduction in the number of drivers caught on the road over the legal limit. In the case I mentioned in my opening address, these young people could not get a taxi. Other people I have spoken to with regard to drink driving and the issue of public and passenger transport have said they risk it after they have been out and had a few because they are trying to save a few dollars. This is why I have welcomed the addition of the FlatFare taxi service on the Gold Coast. Hopefully, if transport is more affordable and available people will think twice about breaking the law.

The interesting thing that I have noted from the people I have spoken to about the issue is that people know drink driving is stupid. In the case I mentioned earlier, the driver did know better. She knew she could have lost her licence and that it could have affected her career and her ability to travel overseas, but she took the risk anyway. Why? Because she felt she had no other option. They had tried being responsible by catching a taxi, but they were not prepared to wait more than two hours for it. This legislation, if properly administered, will ensure that taxi operators and other passenger transport providers address the issue of peak patronage times and put in place measures to reduce unacceptably long waiting times.

I also note that the bill increases the penalty for transport providers that do not meet key performance indicators, which impose standards such as minimum service levels in commercial service contracts. Taxis provide an invaluable public service, but with that comes a duty to ensure that they do meet their responsibilities. The state government has a responsibility to ensure that these targets are being met, which is why I am supportive of any measure to ensure that taxi providers do meet such standards. Having said that, the government and Queensland Transport also have a significant responsibility to ensure that these standards are fair and attainable. This is vital.

In his second reading speech, the minister said increased penalties will provide incentives for operators to meet minimum performance levels. I hope the transport minister's concept of 'incentives' does not mirror the health minister's, who wants to penalise hospitals for ambulance ramping as a result of bed block, a situation borne out of his government's gross underinvestment in health over the past decade. The government needs to provide greater support for transport providers, not impose arbitrary and impossible quotas or make obtaining licences and carrying out services more difficult than it has to be. Regent Taxis, for example, on the Gold Coast transport in excess of eight million passengers every year. The call centre alone employs more than 50 staff to process calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Greater support for transport providers will ensure both passengers and providers get the best possible service.

Another important element of the bill relates to speed and red-light cameras. In 2005 when I was a new member of this House I remember the former minister for transport having a go at me for acknowledging an incident. I think he said, 'You want to be careful about owning up to things in this place.' The former member for Kawana said the same thing at the time. Did I get off? No, I did not get off. I did not expect to get off. I paid the fine. But now I hear the Deputy Premier and former minister for transport may have lied under oath to avoid a fine for running a red light.

Mr MICKEL: I rise to a point of order. The word is unparliamentary. If you have a look at the standing order with respect to 'lie'—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Palaszczuk): Order! The member will withdraw that.

Mr LANGBROEK: I withdraw. He may well have signed a statutory declaration. We see that he has form for this. At the Shepherdson inquiry he also pleaded the lapse of 15 years about whether he actually lived at Seventh Avenue Coorparoo.

Mr MICKEL: Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. The Shepherdson inquiry has no relevance to this bill whatsoever.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will come back to the bill.

Mr LANGBROEK: The Liberal Party has been impugned in this place every day for the last three months about the Printgate scandal and nothing has come of it.

Mr MICKEL: Point of order—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. The member for Surfers Paradise will resume his seat and I will listen to the point of order.

Mr MICKEL: You asked the member to withdraw. He should show some respect for the chair.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have listened to the point of order. I want the member to come back to the bill and please confine his comments to the bill at hand.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am pleased to note the amendments which will extend the period for which proceedings can be commenced against hit-and-run drivers. This is certainly something we have seen too much of on the Gold Coast. Hopefully this will serve as another deterrent for drivers who attempt to avoid the law. The bill will also bring Queensland's law into line with the national legislative regime as it pertains to heavy vehicles. With regard to long distance road travel, it is important that we achieve uniform laws so that similar high standards are upheld in every state including Queensland.