



Speech by

Peta-Kaye Croft

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (12.40 pm): I am pleased to rise in support of this bill as it will improve the availability of taxis in the southern area of the Gold Coast for people wanting to travel to New South Wales. Both states recognised the need for such changes, culminating in the two Premiers signing a memorandum of understanding for services in the Tweed-Gold Coast region in March this year. The MOU actively supports the residents and businesses in the Tweed Heads and lower Gold Coast region to improve services across several areas, mainly health and transport. Queensland and New South Wales taxis will be able to offer better services to patrons from special designated ranks in the border area. This bill will clarify taxi arrangements in the two bordering communities—one of the key aspects of the MOU.

The amendments will allow New South Wales taxis to enter Queensland to drop off passengers they have picked up in New South Wales and then rank at designated dual taxi ranks to pick up passengers for a return fare to New South Wales. The designated dual taxi ranks will support taxi drivers by allowing them to obtain journeys back to their home state. Through the ability to obtain a return fare, drivers will be encouraged to undertake journeys across the border. I understand that the New South Wales government is putting in place similar arrangements for Queensland taxis to operate in New South Wales.

As the population grows in both communities, there is an increasing need to ensure an integrated service approach. This bill is an important step in achieving this. The integration of people and services will bring increased opportunities for community services and economic growth. By increasing travel options in and around the region, taxi patrons can feel confident that they will get a taxi when they need it to where they need it. This is not the only improvement in the Gold Coast area that has resulted in taxi patrons feeling more confident about the taxi services available to them.

Since November 2006 secure taxi ranks funded by the government have been operating successfully from three locations situated in the heart of the Gold Coast's key entertainment precincts—two in Surfers Paradise in Cavill and Orchid avenues and one in Broadbeach in the Oasis precinct. These secure ranks, all of which feature closed-circuit television cameras, were put in place in time to protect the party goers for schoolies week last year and have operated every weekend since. The ranks have been extremely well received by both the schoolies crowd and other late-night party goers. I am sure members will agree, particularly those blessed with teenagers who are future schoolies participants, that many parents will feel more comfortable knowing that secure taxi ranks mean the presence of marshals and security guards and therefore there is less likelihood of incidents occurring. Since their introduction on the Gold Coast, the secure taxi ranks continue to be strongly supported by taxi patrons and the taxi industry.

Last week we experienced one of the biggest weekends so far, thanks to the Blues on Broadbeach Festival. Taxi drivers servicing the Oasis taxi rank drove over 1,000 patrons home. Let us not forget that many of those taxi drivers were there because of the \$2 surcharge that this government introduced to encourage taxi drivers to work late at night in these taxi service areas. I support this bill in delivering a vital improvement to that important region. The bill complements other improvements made to the taxi industry through the introduction of the secure taxi rank program. I commend the bill to the House.