



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Hansard Tuesday, 9 October 2007

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (5.36 pm): I rise to support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2007. I am particularly interested in the reforms to the limousine industry contained in this omnibus bill. The amendments contained in the bill introduce several critical reforms to improve service delivery in the limousine industry. These 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 these amendments are the changes to enable greater flexibility for operators, recognising the special nature of some of their services.

Whole of Queensland limousine licences currently cost \$130,000, and the availability of licences across Queensland is carefully controlled to ensure the security of the investment made by operators. However, there is a small part of the industry that does not want to provide conventional limousine services. These operators usually have one or two privately owned classic vehicles. For example, a 1927 Model A Ford or 1930s Hupmobile. Often the expensive purchases and the cost of maintaining these vehicles means the operators themselves place limits on the type of work they do. They are usually reserved for specific purposes such as weddings and school formals. These limits place obvious restrictions on the return operators can generate and rule out the conventional limousine licence as the cost cannot be recovered.

Queensland Transport is aware of instances where vehicles have been used to provide chauffeur driven services for a fee. This activity is illegal as these services would only be provided by an appropriately licensed and accredited vehicle. This illegal behaviour does not provide a sufficient safeguard for the travelling public. The service provider does not have the appropriate insurance, and consequently these 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 travelling 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 operations.

This bill creates a special purpose licence—the SPL 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 limousine operators. Licences will be leased on an annual basis for a set fee of \$2,000, and SPLs will provide the public with a greater choice of vehicle options for those very special occasions. In addition, it 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 licence limousines will provide Queensland customers with the confidence that the vehicle and the services meet a minimum required performance standard while also having the opportunity to share in the experience of these classic cars.

The bill also addresses another issue in the limousine industry—touting and plying for hire. This practice has seen some limousine operators engaging in unfair practices in direct competition with the taxi industry. This is unfair because limousine operators do not pay the same price for licences as taxi operators. This practice also directly conflicts with how these two industries are intended to operate.

Limousines are required to operate under a prebooking arrangement and can only stand in approved locations waiting for work. Most of these limousine ranks operate on the Gold Coast. This bill will make it a requirement for limousine operators to have an electronic recording as evidence of prebooking 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 prebooked their journey, it is currently difficult to determine if a prebooking 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 prebookings 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 service 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. I welcome the introduction of the taxi and limousine reform package of initiatives delivered by this bill, and I commend the bill to the House.