



Speech by

Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard Thursday, 19 April 2007

TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (ROAD USE MANAGEMENT—GREEN VEHICLES CONCESSION) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (10.23 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The intent of this bill is to increase the adoption of hybrid and electric vehicles by the general public in urban areas by allowing registration concessions. It will work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce further our reliance on oil as a fuel source. Just as there is no doubt that climate change is now the No. 1 concern across the planet, there is no doubt that, regardless of its genesis, governments in all countries and at all levels are searching for ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This has become a bipartisan effort to find new, inexpensive and easily implemented means of reducing gas outputs and utilising alternative energy sources.

Petrol-electric hybrid vehicles use up to 50 per cent less fuel than conventionally powered vehicles, cut exhaust pollution by up to 80 per cent and are gaining in worldwide importance as viable alternatives to present technology. The state government does have a policy of reducing vehicle emissions and does lease hybrid vehicles from Q-Fleet, but at present there are no financial incentives offered by the state government to promote and increase the adoption of environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient hybrid and electric vehicles.

In view of further restrictions on emissions and access to inner-city areas, hybrid drive, with its combination of well-proven components—that is the internal combustion engine and the electric motor—is ideally suited to lessen the effects of spiralling fuel costs on consumers and reduce emissions, particularly in urban and city areas. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Public Policy Network Conference in February 2007 found that although hybrids offer a serious alternative to conventional vehicles there is really very little economic motivation to purchase a hybrid passenger car.

Although this technology has been readily adopted by public entities such as Councils and Government departments it has largely been ignored to date by the wider public. The principal barrier to wider adoption has, up to now, been the higher purchase costs relative to conventional vehicles despite known future fuel savings. It is well known that if this barrier could be lowered to reduce initial and ongoing running costs, numbers of vehicles purchased would increase, leading to further lower vehicle costs and we would escape the current Catch 22 situation.

Countries in the European Union and individual States in the United States are proactively promoting this adoption in their constituencies by introducing incentives, financial and otherwise, to purchasers of hybrid vehicles.

The Coalition has an existing policy to “Encourage the use of economically sustainable environmentally friendly fuels” and “Encourage the adoption of vehicle emission reductions” and I believe it is appropriate that government take further public steps to promote the technology and provide a kick start to the increased uptake of this kind of vehicle.

It is an opportune time to actively promote hybrid cars by introducing incentives for their purchase. Reduced registration for hybrid vehicles would assist in their uptake. Hybrid cars (petrol/electric and soon diesel/electric) offer very significant reductions in fuel consumption and have very low emission engines. They save about 50 per cent in fuel consumption and are very suited to our road conditions.

Allowing concessional registration fees for hybrid and electric vehicles will further reduce costs and increase their attractiveness to private individuals as well as businesses. Offering financial incentives to stimulate consumer demand is consistent with other current Government initiatives offering Queenslanders a greater choice of energy sources, and more opportunities to reduce energy use, save money and help the environment.

Moves are all ready underway in Queensland to increase this uptake. The recent Queensland fuel enquiry recommended further investigation of the issue. A recent National Road and Motorists Association survey also showed that 75 per cent of respondents wanted local car manufacturers to do more to provide hybrid and lower-consumption cars. The NRMA's Business Wise survey of members has shown that many business owners want incentive rebates offered to private vehicle owners. Overall, more than 65 per cent of small business owners were preparing to exchange their vehicles for smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The survey highlighted the need for Government to look at doing something to help small to medium business and found that more than half of the businesses are downsizing their fleet and looking for more fuel efficient vehicles.

A paper delivered to the Public Policy Network Conference, "Diesel and the Biofuel Policy Debate", in Adelaide on the 1st and 2nd February 2007 pointed out that "hybrids offer a serious alternative to conventional vehicles, and can only improve with further technological advancement (which will presumably reduce purchase cost)".

Mr Speaker Concessional registration is already currently available in Queensland for Seniors card holders, trailers, primary producers, and ambulances etc. The change will make very little difference to government revenue, will take little to introduce and will be a real and proactive first step in attacking climate change head on. With Brisbane hosting the third Australia-New Zealand Climate Change and Business Conference in August 2007 it be opportune to have this initiative in place before the Conference itself.

During the last State election, the Queensland Coalition announced that in Government we would pay particular attention to steps that could be taken to ameliorate the impact of the 'greenhouse effect' and would pursue investigations into practical alternatives to fossil fuels.

Mr Speaker this bill is a means of taking immediate and proactive action in reducing the hazards we may face. It is simple, easy, positive and it's effects may be monitored and adapted if necessary through regulation without the need for further legislation. It is deliberately non-political in nature and I am confident of attracting the support of all of the Members regardless of political persuasion.

I commend the bill to the House.