



Speech by

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TRANSPORT (NEW QUEENSLAND DRIVER LICENSING) AMENDMENT BILL; ADULT PROOF OF AGE CARD BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (3.32 pm): It is my pleasure to rise and speak in the debate on the cognate bills—the Transport (New Queensland Driver Licensing) Amendment Bill and the Adult Proof of Age Card Bill. I note that the LNP is not supporting the bills. I note the contribution of the honourable shadow minister, the member for Maroochydore. I want to address three issues. They are: the cost of implementing this new technology and the new cards; the security of information; and the cynicism about the government's intention in the future in terms of the cost.

Looking at the first issue, I note the contribution of the member for Maroochydore. She quoted a letter of 2005 from Ian Dearden, the then president of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties. In terms of the cost factor he said—and I note that the member for Burnett has quoted from this letter—

There is, in our view, no economic, technological nor practical rationale for the introduction of a 'Smart Card' licence. The existing driver's licence in Queensland is relatively cheap to produce and maintain ...

He continued—

Figures have been quoted for the development of a Queensland Transport Department 'Smart Card' up to some \$60M.

I note that it is now up to \$84 million and that the original quotes were \$20 million some five years ago. He said in his letter of June 2005—

We do not consider that there has been any substantive case made out that the alleged benefits of a 'Smart Card' will outweigh the cost. We make that comment, of course, without any consideration of the financial and non-financial cost of the potential breaches of privacy.

In terms of the first issue, the issue of cost, I think it is quite significant that the original quote some five years ago was \$20 million. That has now blown out to \$84 million. At page 6 of the explanatory notes for the Transport (New Queensland Driver Licensing) Amendment Bill it states under the heading 'Estimated cost for government implementation'—

It is not anticipated that the Queensland Government will face any administrative costs associated with the implementation of the proposed amendments as it will be conducted on a cost recovery basis.

Exactly the same sentence is at page 4 of the explanatory notes for the Adult Proof of Age Card Bill 2008. It says that the administrative costs will be conducted on a cost recovery basis. That is a pretty simple principle. If it is going to cost this government \$84 million to implement these provisions it is going to be recovering the costs from drivers. That means that drivers licences will go up.

Whilst the current system could be improved in some way, I do not think that Queenslanders in the current economic circumstances would want to have a drivers licence regime that will result in increased costs either for a one-year licence or a five-year licence. I know what will happen next. The government will say that we cannot have five-year licences and that we will have to renew them annually. That would be an annoying impost for many drivers. The other option would be that the relative increase would be much greater than it currently is. That would be an impost on people who are struggling with increased electricity charges, as we heard this morning, and with the other increases at a time, as the Premier said this morning, of a very difficult global financial crisis.

We in the opposition are entitled to be cynical about the fact that this government is unable to manage its budgets and its planning. Something that was going to be \$20 million is now going to be \$84 million. Knowing this government, it will blow out to over \$100 million.

I quote from a more recent letter from the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties that I understand the member for Maroochydore has come into possession of. It is written to the minister, the Hon. John Mickel, the Minister for Transport, Trade, Employment and Industrial Relations, and is dated 1 December. It is written by Michael Cope, the president, for and on behalf of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties. He makes the point about the government's consultation process—

Whilst getting off to a good start it has broken down utterly. Please explain how after some five years it has now become urgent for the government to pass this legislation? Why was the bill introduced without a consultation draft being provided to us, particularly given that we had had a meeting with your officers in August? Your officers have also told us that they engaged the Crown Solicitor to prepare a privacy impact statement. It should be conducted in advance of or in parallel with the development of a proposal rather than retrospectively.

The Council for Civil Liberties is concerned that it has not received a draft privacy impact assessment. This initiative has already been the subject of comment by the Commonwealth Privacy Commissioner. So it has requested that it be provided with a copy of that document.

The second issue that I am concerned about, which the member for Maroochydore also mentioned, is the security of the information. The Council for Civil Liberties is concerned about that as well. In the letter of 2005 it states—

The Queensland Council for Civil Liberties is deeply concerned about the accumulation of digitized photographs which will be held by Queensland Transport under this proposal. Function creep is a constant concern, particularly at the intersection of the accumulation of information by government departments and the perceived interests of law enforcement agencies. The experience of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties over many years with law enforcement agencies is that they will seek to take advantage of any opportunity to broaden their powers, particularly when it concerns something as attractive as a database full of photographs of all Queensland drivers.

I think the general public is very concerned about the security of information. We know about the debate from 1988 when then Prime Minister Bob Hawke wanted to bring in the Australia Card.

Australians and Queenslanders are concerned about what will happen with the information. As has been mentioned, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee also raised concerns in that it said that the bill would affect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information provided by individuals and the committee notes that the specified purposes for which the information collected may be used extend well beyond proof of age purposes. I also note that the Council for Civil Liberties has said—

The need for the card is motivated by confusion about the purpose of the drivers licence. No matter what it may have become by dint of usage, the purpose of a drivers licence is not to prove identification.

That is again a quote from the Council for Civil Liberties letter dated 1 December.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: The member for Maroochydore will table this letter later so members opposite can read it in its entirety if they wish to. It continues—

Even if we accept that it is legitimate to view the drivers licence as a form of identification, it is not clear to us how the new smart card can advance that purpose. Firstly, we observe that the new licence will not have the person's address on the front of it. This will be welcome, but what this means is that when the drivers licence is presented by a person as proof of identity the person receiving it will be able to (1) look at the photograph which is to be printed on the card which is exactly the same as what they can do at the present and (2) if they have a card reader request the person presenting the card to insert their PIN into the card to enable them to verify that the licence is in fact a genuine product of Queensland Transport.

It then says—

This then raises the issue as to whether or not the photograph on the new card will be any more secure than the photograph on the existing card. We invite your comment on this issue given the ready availability of technology such as smart card printers.

It also mentions that it is concerned about the storage of digitised photographs. The LNP clearly shares those concerns.

The final issue that I am concerned about is the cynicism about the government's intentions. It is not just the cost recovery that it may be talking about doing now to recover the \$84 million or more but whether it may well use it as an increased revenue-raising measure as we have seen before because it has to raise revenue, because we heard this morning in this place that the budget is going to go into deficit for what the government describes as potentially a temporary period. But of course I think we are all concerned about how temporary that is likely to be.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I note that, of the \$64 billion of debt that we are going into—I take the interjection from the member for Ashgrove—it is \$64 billion of debt until 2012—

Mr Dickson interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): I remind the member for Kawana that he has already had the opportunity to speak.

Ms JONES: I rise to a point of order. That is not what I said. He knows that is not what I said and I ask him to withdraw it. I find it offensive that he changed the words that I said to put on the parliamentary record and I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to withdraw. The point I was making was that the government already has debt up to 2011-12 in both the government sector and the GOC sector that is already \$64 billion without any plan to repay it. As I say, Queenslanders are entitled to be cynical about the intentions of the government bringing in something that is expensive in an environment where we do not have the money to do it. They are concerned about what is going to happen to the information that is supposedly being presented as being superior to what they currently have, but people are concerned that it may be misused. They are also concerned that the government's intention may be to raise more money than it is actually getting just from the licence to offset the \$64 billion of debt that we know is coming.