



Speech by

**Steve Wettenhall**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

Hansard Wednesday, 28 October 2009

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## **CAIRNS, PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (11.42 am): The Bligh government is committed to building a modern, efficient, accessible, comfortable and affordable public transport system in Cairns. This year local bus operator Sunbus has taken delivery of 24 new buses thanks to a \$5 million contribution from the Bligh government. The new buses are bigger, faster, quieter, more fuel efficient and easier to drive than the older units they have replaced. These new low-floor buses offer much improved accessibility for frail, aged and wheelchair passengers.

Bus patronage has grown in the Cairns region by 9.2 per cent in the year to July, with three million journeys undertaken sparked by the popularity of the new qconnect services. Work in the region is also continuing on developing the Cairns transit network, which will connect major activity services with rapid and reliable bus services as a key part of the Far North Queensland 2031 regional plan.

The expansion of the fleet will enable improved scheduling and the bus operator to consider further expansion of the route network into rapidly growing areas of the community not currently serviced. One such area is the Freshwater Valley in Redlynch in my electorate. Between 2003 and 2008 the population of that area increased by 12 per cent, from 1,430 people to 2,520 people. Today I will be lodging with the Clerk a petition containing the signatures of 826 residents who support the extension of bus services into the Freshwater Valley. The petition is a strong indication of the support for a new route to service this rapidly growing suburb in Cairns.