



Speech by

Dr Alex Douglas

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Hansard Wednesday, 18 August 2010

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (FEES) AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (7.58 pm): I wish to second the motion put by the shadow minister, the member for Maroochydore. Governments must not do things that can be reasonably avoided if the implications of their actions are unfair and unreasonable. Unfair and unreasonable actions should be decided on the basis of available evidence made in an environment of the impartial application of principles and processes that are deemed appropriate by consensus support of the quorum of democratically elected representatives responsible to develop such principles and processes.

Similarly, agencies designated by the quorum are charged with delivering the policy in a framework to the public that reflects the intent of the policy and allows the public to self-select those regulations that include them where their own individual situation or actions are prescribed by legislation. As such, there is a debate about whether this action by the Bligh Labor government has the right to increase the registration beyond what is reasonable, in this case by CPI, and a fixed increase over and above that of the previous registration fee applying to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Vehicle Registration) Regulation 1999 part 16, primarily this regulation.

In the past two years registration has gone up by 27 per cent, as has been raised, and 36 per cent for commercial vehicles. We also understand that we cannot—

Mr Wettenhall: How would you pay for the roads?

Dr DOUGLAS: The member for Barron River should just listen. I am trying to say that there is a clear case of, firstly, gouging fees from motorists in Queensland unreasonably and, secondly, a potential breach of section 51 of the Constitution. It is the second point that I would like to emphasise primarily.

I completely agree with the sentiments expressed by the member for Maroochydore regarding price gouging. To all her comments I would add the following facts, which may have escaped the Bligh Labor government's attention. Motorists' costs are increasing by \$220 per person. The 8c per litre fuel levy was scrapped, adding an extra \$500 million in costs to Queensland motorists. Queensland is the most expensive state in Australia to own and operate a car, yet we are the most decentralised state. When added to tollway increases of between 30 per cent and 100 per cent, we have a clear case established for unfair cost recovery and unreasonable charges by this government.

If we are truly the Smart State, firstly, should it not be cheaper to own and operate a car in this state? Secondly, should registration not go up by CPI only, if at all? Thirdly, if times really are so tough because of the GFC and the recession we did not have to have, why would this government increase the cost to average Queenslanders of getting around? Fourthly, why would the state need to charge more than any other state for cost recovery? The truth is that there is no justification for any of these things. This was a decision made in a vacuum by desperate people—Labor. Therefore, the LNP and I are calling for a fair go, a fair go for families, small business and for all motoring Queenslanders.

I suspect that this exorbitant fee could also be deemed constitutionally illegal and may be challenged under section 51, chapter I, part V of the Commonwealth Constitution. Specifically, it appears to breach the major provisions relating to discrimination between states. Motor vehicles do move beyond state borders and routinely do so. Commercially, it is more likely. Members need to know that a B-quad used for cattle transport from western Queensland to South Australia now attracts \$28,000 in registration in Queensland. There is considerable evidence to support a section 51 challenge.

Motor vehicle registration is a significant component in the everyday cost of living of average Queenslanders. There can be no justification for the price hike on electricity, which is up 30 per cent, fuel is up eight per cent and rates are up seven per cent. The major component of water is up 25 per cent and potentially is up 300 per cent in six years. The average charge for water for a family for six months is currently \$245. As I say, motor vehicle registration is also up.

South-East Queensland is now ranked amongst the least affordable places to live in the world, ahead of New York, London and Santa Barbara in the US. In a study of 272 markets in the Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, 62 markets were identified as unaffordable and 22 of those were Australian. The Gold Coast comes in at No. 4 just after the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane comes in at No. 22 and Melbourne at No. 8. The factors noted are the cost of living, lower wages and rising property prices. Furthermore, in contrast to the Labor obsession with overregulation and a failed SEQ plan, the review stated that housing unaffordability has been driven by the devastating impact of land use regulation and the false belief that denser means cheaper. Twenty-four per cent of respondents to a recent poll on the website Gold Coast.com run by the *Gold Coast Bulletin* revealed that they were thinking of moving to another city away from the Gold Coast.

Is this ignorant Labor government listening to the public? Has it got any idea why the public hates the Premier and the Labor brand? It is because they cannot handle the intolerable increasing burden of costs due to Labor waste and mismanagement. This week Labor members should have hung their heads in shame when it was revealed that Queensland was the only state in Australia to not even grant a concession or free travel on public transport for Seniors Week. Seniors deserve a fair go for their contribution to the state and the nation.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! Member for Keppel, member for Lockyer, order, please.

Dr DOUGLAS: Has it occurred to anyone in this chaotic Bligh Labor government that the rapid transit scheme on the Gold Coast is not linked to heavy rail but instead terminates in two locations where there is no public parking. Ten million tourists come to the coast annually but they will never use it because it is neither rapid nor mass transit. Gold Coasters and today's editorial in our local newspaper have stated that this is a mass transit scheme to nowhere because the missing link is incomplete in the current plan, which is a link to the heavy rail, primarily at Helensvale. Yet here we are spending \$1.8 billion, with the major sum going to suppliers who are well beyond our shores.

These numbers sound so familiar. We have been talking tonight about the NBN plan, this \$43 billion plan that started off as a \$6 billion plan in 2007. People do not realise that the annual interest bill on \$1 billion alone is \$46.7 million every year. Then a capital return has to be made on it as well. This comes at a time when ordinary Queenslanders cannot afford to pay their car rego because they would never have budgeted for this manifest Labor incompetence in increasing their charges. This increase is totally unjustified. It is wrong. Do Labor members really know what these significant costs are? Do they understand how hard it is to pay it back? This Labor government has lost its way. It has alienated the Queensland public and it deserves what it has got coming to it.

For its entire first term in office, the LNP will freeze registration fees for cars and light vehicles along with recreational boats, trailers and horse floats. We call on the Labor members to show some spine and deliver for all Queenslanders universal support for this motion.