



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 18 August 2010

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

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (7.45 pm): I move—

That subordinate legislation No. 100 of 2010, Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2010, tabled in the House on 8 June 2010 be disallowed.

This disallowance motion concerns a number of provisions within the regulation but particularly the Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Vehicle Registration) Regulation 1999. While this regulation covers about 16 acts, it is the nature of parliament that under the rules we do not have an opportunity to amend regulations or move a disallowance against a portion of a regulation. Therefore, it is important that we bring this matter before the House.

We have heard how Queenslanders are hurting from the high costs of living and we have listened. That is why we are calling for a freeze on registration hikes, which is LNP policy, and we are giving the Labor government a chance to do the same and reject the latest increase. The question is this: is this Labor government willing to listen and respond to the pain of Queenslanders who are really struggling with the high costs of living? That struggle has been added to by the fact that over the past couple of years this Labor government has increased vehicle registration costs by up to 27 per cent. Two hundred thousand Queenslanders have signed two petitions calling for relief from this registration hike.

I call on the government to freeze vehicle registration charges, to listen to the people of Queensland and to understand that what is occurring in Queensland has resulted from a government inflicted downturn being felt by many businesses. This morning we heard how the number of failing Queensland businesses is significantly higher than in the rest of Australia. Queensland is bearing the burden of a government that has put up costs beyond the other states of Australia. Queenslanders cannot pay for this cumulative impact, which is reaching into their pockets and causing real hardship. It is time for Queensland motorists to have relief rather than rebuff from this government. I am calling on the government to listen to the people. They are hurting, and a lot of that hurt is the result of a range of costs that have been imposed through this government's decisions and directly through higher taxes and charges.

In the past two years we have seen the cost of registration go up by up to 27 per cent. This regulation also brings significant increases to heavy vehicle registration and those costs are passed on, through business, to consumers. As I said, it is LNP policy to freeze vehicle registration charges in our first term and give people relief. However, tonight Labor has the opportunity to hear the message of the people and also freeze registration price increases. In that way, it can make up for what it has done in regard to the other taxes and it can start to listen to the people.

This government went to an election promising not to get rid of the fuel tax rebate. It broke that promise and now Queenslanders are paying more than \$500 million out of their pockets for that petrol tax.

We have also seen this government significantly increase the tolls on the motorways. That is having an impact on pensioners, people who work and commercial businesses, some of whom have found that their costs on the motorways have gone up by 350 per cent. So the government needs to listen to the people. There is an opportunity to stimulate the economy in Queensland by listening to the people and not burdening them with these accumulative increases in costs.

The RACQ estimated that the average Queensland motorist was paying up to \$220 more this year as a result of the petrol tax, increased registration fees and toll fees being forced upon them. There is an opportunity for the government to redress this or it could once again ignore the will of the people. I want to remind government members of some of their own promises. We heard that they have broken their promise in regard to the petrol tax. Queenslanders have now had that fuel tax rebate taken away from them, and the imposition of that tax has flowed through the economy and has had a significant impact. When state Labor government members were talking about the first increase in registration fees, they did not come out publicly and say what they were going to do with that money. Publicly they tried to say that they would put that increase into roads. I want to table a letter signed by the Treasurer, Andrew Fraser, on 8 December 2008 which puts the lie to that claim that it was all about money going back into roads.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! Member for Maroochydore, that word is unparliamentary and I ask you to withdraw.

Ms SIMPSON: I withdraw. This puts a focus on the extreme falsehood and determination of this government to mislead the people of Queensland. This letter from the Treasurer reveals that the money was not going back into roads. The letter is to the main roads minister at the time, Warren Pitt, outlining what the government was actually going to do with the money from that registration hike. He wrote—

Further to that advice, I can inform you that CBRC has also agreed to increase motor vehicle registration fees by 20 per cent from 1 July 2009 with the revenue derived from the increase to pass fully to the Consolidated Fund and not to the Department of Main Roads as currently occurs.

I table that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 8 December 2008, from Hon. Andrew Fraser MP, Treasurer, to Hon. Warren Pitt MP, Minister for Main Roads and Local Government, in relation to allocation of revenue from motor vehicle registration fees [2776].

Government members tried to keep this myth going that it was all about increased funding going to roads, but we saw in the budget this year that road funding for the state of Queensland was slashed by \$250 million, not increased. They cannot lie straight in bed in regard to what they tell the public and in regard to their promises before the election about taxes and what they do afterwards. We want to see some honesty and we also want to see some relief for those who are hurting the most. People really are hurting with the accumulative impact of the government's costs on them. The sticky fingers of the government keep dripping into their pockets and ripping out their last dollar.

I also mentioned the truck registration hikes which are flowing through. These come on top of another increase, which is in fact the increase in the fuel excise which adds 9c a litre. The decision of the transport ministers throughout Australia to agree to this truck registration hike has meant that, firstly, this huge increase will flow on to consumers and, secondly, an unintended impact may be that it is more likely that people will go away from some of the more efficient combinations—

Mr Rickuss: We are so diversified in Queensland also.

Ms SIMPSON: That is right; Queensland is diversified. There is a real likelihood that, because it is in fact favouring other combinations, we will see an increase in the number of trucks on the road, not a decrease, as people opt to go for a combination that cuts their registration fees but makes a bigger impact on our roads due to the fact that you cannot move that amount of freight with the B-double combinations under this current cost. There is a real concern that this move has not taken into account the unintended consequences in that it actually discourages some of the more efficient combinations.

I call on the minister to heed the concerns of Queenslanders about this particular impact. While there is a place for appropriate national regulation, ultimately and firstly the minister has to stand up for Queensland and stand up for understanding the impacts on the cost of living in this state. We are not like Victoria. If you drive three hours out of Melbourne, you are close to the borders. If you drive three hours out of Brisbane, you are not even halfway across the state to the west and you are certainly nowhere near even getting halfway up the coast of Queensland.

Mr Rickuss: Not even in Bundaberg.

Ms SIMPSON: Correct. This state is different because of the nature of its geography and that requires an understanding and a respect. This is something that we are aware of from talking to people in freight and also from talking to those consumers who, at the end of the day—

Mr Wettenhall: Fascinating insight!

Mr Rickuss: That goes to show North Queenslanders don't even realise how it is affecting them.

Ms SIMPSON: It is a bit stunning, isn't it? This state is a very large state in regard to moving freight and there are particular cost impacts that Queenslanders have felt as a result of that. I want to table an article from the *Toowoomba Chronicle* that talks about some of the registration hikes and the costs to consumers. The words of some of these transport operators clearly outline how this has had such a negative impact.

Government members interjected.

Ms SIMPSON: I can hear that there is some guffawing and laughing from Labor members who do not think this is serious, but when I talk to Queenslanders who are hurting—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Treasurer!

Ms SIMPSON: I table this document.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 25 May 2010, from the *Toowoomba Chronicle* titled 'Truck rego hike to cost consumers' [2777].

I note that this government has no remorse for the pain it is inflicting upon ordinary Queenslanders, be it through increased freight costs or directly through their registration for their cars. It stuns me that government members do not get it. People are fed up with the way that they have abused their trust. They deliberately misled them in regard to removing the fuel tax rebate and imposed a tax upon them through the petrol bowser and now there are ongoing costs accumulatively through registration. If they do not get it now, when will they get it?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer, please!

Mr Rickuss: I am being provoked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Bring yourself to order.

Ms SIMPSON: We have also seen reports about how the average cost of living for Queenslanders has risen by about \$1,200 a year. Across the board, we are seeing increases above CPI, particularly driven by higher power costs as a result of this Labor Party misleading the people of Queensland. We have higher water costs, higher toll prices, higher registration fees and certainly higher petrol costs, and there are many other areas that the government has a direct responsibility for. I want to table this article as well because it outlines again the stress that people are under in Queensland.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 30 May 2010, from News.com.au titled 'Cost of living in Queensland rises \$1200 a year' [2778].

When will government members ever listen? When will they understand? When will they respond in a way that will finally give some relief to people where it matters and allow them to get on with their lives? If government members really cared about the people of Queensland, if they cared about stimulating this economy throughout the regions of Queensland, if they cared about saving businesses that are no longer viable due to higher costs imposed by the government and the fact this is the most regulated government in Australia—with double the number of pages of regulation of some of our near state neighbours—then they would change that.

I call on government members to heed LNP policy, freeze the registration increases, listen to the people about those impacts, stop putting their heads in the sand because Queenslanders are hurting and that is why they are crying out for a government that understands. If government members do not support our motion to see the freezing of this registration hike, then clearly they have not listened to the people of Queensland.