




Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Thursday, 7 April 2011

TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (8.29 pm), in reply: As I said in my second reading speech, tonight we are making a number of important amendments to transport legislation. Provisions included in the bill will mean the more effective and efficient construction of the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project, more options for police to crack down on high-risk drink drivers and the creation of court ordered exclusion orders that will prohibit a person from using the public transport network in certain circumstances. The bill before the House will also make a number of minor amendments to the legislation.

The most significant amendment to be introduced by the legislation is a new middle alcohol limit offence for drink drivers. I thank opposition members and all members of the House for their support of this initiative, because road safety is very important. Anything that the government does to reduce the road toll should be welcomed. As I said in my second reading speech, research tells us that a driver with a blood alcohol level of .10 is five times more likely to be involved in a crash than a person with a level of zero. This bill makes it an offence to drive with a blood alcohol level of .10 up to .15, and heavy penalties will be involved. In addition, a person charged with the new middle alcohol limit offence will have their driver's licence suspended immediately. This extends the existing suspensions that apply to those with a blood alcohol level of more than .15 to ensure that all drivers detected with high levels of alcohol will lose their driving privileges until they have been dealt with by the courts.

I turn to the civil exclusion orders. The bill amends the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act to provide for civil court issued exclusion orders that will prohibit a person from using the public transport network in certain circumstances—for example, fare evasion; interfering with a service, vehicle or equipment; creating a disturbance or nuisance on a railway or in a vehicle; interfering with a railway; or trespassing on railway, busway or light rail land. The exclusion orders are modelled on the regime used in the recently passed changes to the Liquor Act. A civil exclusion order is primarily a deterrence based measure that aims to ensure the safety and security of persons using the public transport network. Public safety on our public transport system is indeed critical, and these amendments will ensure it is further safeguarded.

I will make some brief responses to the issues that were raised by the shadow minister—hopefully I will address those issues—and then I will address the issues raised by other members. In relation to the civil banning orders, the opposition has missed a critical feature of the amendment by focusing on the 10 penalty infringement notices. A single act of violence is enough to warrant a civil banning order, provided the criteria set out in the bill are met. A detailed implementation plan is being developed in consultation with the Queensland police rail squad, Queensland Rail Ltd and TransLink to ensure we can consistently identify and prevent people who have been banned from using public transport. Generally, offenders who continue to offend are well known to TransLink officers and members of the Queensland police rail squad. They will be identified quickly if they breach a banning order.

In relation to the issue of the disposal of surplus land which the honourable member raised, the amendment does not change the compensation or appeal arrangements for former landowners.

Landowners were appropriately compensated when their land was resumed. This amendment streamlines the process by which resumed land that is no longer required by the department can be offered back to the former owner. The vast majority of former owners are not interested in purchasing back what are usually small parcels of land. Under the current process, it can take up to two years to establish that the former owner has no interest in the land. This amendment is an important regulatory reform that will reduce this time to six months and allow the department to dispose of land more specifically. I think that also addresses an issue raised by a number of other members in the debate tonight.

In relation to alcohol ignition interlocks, an issue was raised about the radius distance measure. During the drafting of the amendment relating to alcohol ignition interlocks, the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel advised that the specific power relating to distance or travelling time did not clearly provide for an exemption based on a radius measure. For this reason, a regulation was made to provide for an exemption based on a radius measure to overcome the problem. On the advice of Parliamentary Counsel, we are now clarifying the specific power so that in future a radius measure can be used.

An issue was raised relating to transport inspectors and the enforcement of transit lanes. From May to October 2010, a trial operated on certain roads that resulted in significantly reduced bus travel times. The roads were Waterworks Road, Kelvin Grove Road, Mains Road, and Adelaide, Queen and Wickham streets. We saw considerable savings in bus travel times. For example, on Kelvin Grove Road there was a 19 per cent reduction, on Mains Road there was a 10 per cent reduction and on Adelaide, Queen and Wickham streets there was a 14 per cent reduction. The trial included 108 hours of on-road enforcement over 55 days. The trial was successful and a lot of infringement notices were issued. More than 40 existing officers were trained to undertake those activities and are deployed in groups of four to six. I stress that those officers were not diverted from safety related activities. In fact, we have increased the number of inspectors for safety related inspections. Recently, the department employed 12 extra transport inspectors to focus on taxi compliance. Those enforcement officers can patrol 71 possible locations. Any additional sites will be chosen based on the level of violation and, of course, safety is again fundamental.

The shadow minister raised some issues in relation to the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project and the interface agreements. Interface agreements are like building management statements. They help manage the relationship between owners and operators around transport infrastructure. For example, a light rail system running through a mall requires the effective organisation of things such as maintenance and cleaning. Another issue was raised in relation to the operator accreditation for light rail. In this respect, the bill amends the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994; there is no amendment to the Transport (Rail Safety) Act 2010. The amendment will bring the light rail requirements for drivers into line with the heavy rail requirements in the Transport (Rail Safety) Act.

The shadow minister asked about compensation for overhead wires. The possibility of damage from attaching overhead wires is unique to a light rail project in a built-up area. Therefore, a specific provision dealing with that issue is required. The amendment clarifies that compensation is limited to physical damage and not aesthetics. It means that, for example, a person cannot seek compensation because they simply do not like the look of overhead wires. In every other respect the compensation arrangements are the same as for other major projects. I encourage anyone who has any issues to speak directly to the project team on the Gold Coast.

The honourable member raised an issue in relation to the release of information where payment is not required. An individual can ask for information related to demerit points, traffic history, offences, expiry dates of driver authorisation, marine licence details and expiry dates and conditions on a person's tow truck certificate. Once again, this focuses on the individual and customer service delivery. Those were the main points that the shadow minister raised in her speech tonight.

I thank all members for their contributions to the debate. I will run through a few issues that members have raised. The member for Dalrymple welcomed the middle range alcohol limit. He referred to road safety and the need for education and rehabilitation programs. I draw the member's attention to the government's response to the EDC report which I tabled in the House today. If the member reads that report he will see that we are running a lot of educational programs and rehabilitation programs through the department of transport. The Minister for Disability Services also runs a number of programs through his portfolio.

The shadow minister for public transport raised the issue of taxi bailments and indicated her support for them. She asked why records needed to be held for five years. Five years is consistent with other provisions and processes. For example, records relating to the tax office are usually held for five years. It is a consistent provision. She also welcomed the civil exclusion bans.

The next part of her speech was very interesting. The member for Aspley said, 'In relation to the Gold Coast Rapid Transit, the LNP consistently supported the project.' Let it now be on the public record that the opposition supports the Gold Coast Rapid Transit that this Bligh Labor government is delivering for the Gold Coast. Over \$900 million in infrastructure is going onto the Gold Coast. It is public transport that is

helping tourism and helping locals. It is a great piece of infrastructure that we are delivering. I welcome the opposition's support, except there appears to be one member on the other side, the previous speaker, who does not quite indicate the same level of support as do other members opposite. The member for Aspley also raised the issue of safety around the Gold Coast Rapid Transit. Let me assure all honourable members that safety is always a priority. I will be keeping a very close eye on the safety provisions, especially when we award the preferred bidder for the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project.

The member for Springwood talked about the alcohol interlock program. She stated that the government's priority to lower our road toll is our top priority. The member for Burleigh talked extensively about the need for the Gold Coast Rapid Transit project on the Gold Coast. She also emphasised that, once we build that project, the buses will better align with the east-west routes. It is very important to have buses connecting with the infrastructure. She also raised the issue of car parking at Varsity Lakes. I was very happy to go and visit Varsity Lakes train station just last week. The issue that the member raised with me related to overcrowding of parking. I went and looked at it personally. We have been able to identify some Department of Transport land. This now means that we will hopefully be able to allocate an extra 50 to 100 car parking spaces within the next month, weather permitting. That is a great piece of infrastructure. Again, who is delivering it? The Bligh Labor government! We are committed to public transport right across this state but we are focusing here on the Gold Coast.

The member for Redlands talked about the drink-driving reforms and indicated his basic support for them. The member for Indooroopilly talked extensively about his lack of understanding of the TransLink fare structure. As I have said time and time again in this House, the TransLink network is the largest integrated transport system in the world. It covers 10,000 square kilometres, which is 6½ times the size of London's network. It is very difficult to compare the TransLink network with other networks around the world. I give this example: TransLink contains 23 zones across a 140 kilometre radius. London contains nine zones across a 40 kilometre radius. London's network carries 7.5 million people and TransLink's network carries 2.8 million people.

The member also expressed concerns about the train timetables. Let me put it on the record once again. This week we announced 150,000 extra seats on our rail network. The member for Indooroopilly may have missed this, but there is some very good news happening out there in Indooroopilly and I might be the first to share it with him. The results of the timetable changes at Indooroopilly mean an increase of six services in the am peak and eight services in the pm peak. There will also be better bus connections to UQ from Indooroopilly and the city. Essentially, Indooroopilly now becomes a hub because we know that it is a growth sector. We know that more people are using that station. That is reflected in the timetable which means increased services for people living around that region. Once again, that has been delivered by the Bligh Labor government. I will say this: the member did get one thing right. He said that we need to get more people onto public transport. Of course, that is one of my key aims: to ensure that we encourage more and more people to use our fantastic public transport network.

The member for Brisbane Central supported the government's views about the new middle range alcohol limit and welcomed the increase in fines. The member for Bulimba talked extensively about the fact that too many people lose their life due to drink-driving. Of course, she recognises that we can do more, but this is the start of major reforms that we can bring about in the future.

The member for Mount Ommaney talked extensively about the benefits of the newly released timetable in her electorate, especially about the upgrades to both the Darra and Oxley railway stations. She also raised the issue of the Jindalee park and ride. She stated that her local councillor, through the local paper, tried to tell residents that there has been no community consultation. As the member for Mount Ommaney is my neighbouring member, I know that there has been extensive consultation and we will continue to consult in relation to this issue.

Mrs Attwood: In May.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The next round is in May. The member will be at that consultation to ensure that the community's views are heard. The member for Buderim wanted to know the reason for the increase from two to three hours relating to the time in which drivers who have been pulled over by police can be tested. This provision is supported by police. The reason for the change is that Queensland is a large state and there are some rural and remote communities in which it does take time and distance before people can actually go to the police station.

Mr Dickson: One-police towns?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, that is the reason. These amendments actually cater for all Queenslanders. We are not just focusing on those regional centres that contain large numbers of people. The member for Glass House raised some issues around a depot near Beerburrum. I am happy to look into that issue for him. He also talked about a meeting in relation to excess land identified at Palmwoods. I am more than happy to follow that up for him. He also welcomed the timetable changes. That is great news. He was very happy that TransLink had listened to the views that he and his community raised in relation to arrivals in the city and departures in the afternoon. I also thank him for his support. Many

commuters have been saying to me that we really need to look at six-month and 12-month annual passes for TransLink. The go card is an evolving product. We can never be satisfied. It is a new system. We can always look for improvements. It is something to which I want to give due consideration over the following months.

The member also mentioned that I was looking at some representatives from areas outside of Brisbane to sit on a committee that I am putting together. I am hoping to announce the composition of that committee and call for expressions of interest next week. I want to ensure that we have a high-level ministerial committee with representatives of people who are out there in our community using public transport. I want representatives from places such as Ipswich, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and the Redlands. We want to make sure that people are the community champions for their areas. They can come along to these meetings and say, 'These are the issues that we are facing on a local level and this is what we need to have fixed.' This is what we will work on together as a community to bring about some significant reform in relation to TransLink.

The member for Ipswich West talked extensively about the civil (court based) exclusion orders. The member for Albert, of course, indicated once again her very strong support for the Gold Coast rapid light rail project.

With those few words, I would like to thank all honourable members for their contributions and for the issues that they have raised tonight. I would like to thank the opposition for their support for the majority of the bill. I know that there are a few issues that were raised during our discussions yesterday and they will be addressed later this evening, but I think I have covered most of them in my response tonight.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my personal staff. I would like to thank the departmental staff who have been working hard. As everyone would appreciate, we are not amending a single act; we are amending 14 acts. I want to thank the officers for their expertise, their knowledge, their contribution and their ability to get across issues very quickly. I thank all members for their participation.