



Speech by

Howard Hobbs

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (PASSENGER TRANSPORT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—LNP) (4.56 pm): The Assembly referred the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee on 13 September 2012. The committee was required to report back to the Assembly by 22 October. The committee called for public submissions by advertising on the parliamentary website, emailing the committee's subscriber list and writing to stakeholders in October 2012. No submissions were received and the committee did not hold a public hearing.

The Minister for Transport and Main Roads announced a restructure of the Department of Transport and Main Roads including the removal of the TransLink board on 31 July 2012. Under the restructure TransLink will no longer operate as a statutory authority confined to the state's south-east. Instead, it will be part of the department and will oversee the qconnect bus network, Traveltrain services and school bus services, along with subsidised regional airlines, coach and ferry services. Under the restructure all Queensland government transport services will be integrated for the first time under the one TransLink banner.

Transport operations affect everyone in this chamber, whether it is Traveltrain or school bus routes. I would like to bring to the attention of the House the issue of school bus routes. I have not been happy with the management of the school bus program in this state. I feel that it has been too rigid. I do not think the people who managed it understood the complications for rural children in particular. There is strict adherence to distances, virtually down to metres to a front gate. In rural areas some schoolchildren have to leave very early in the morning. Children in grade 1 and grade 2 are having to leave home at seven o'clock in the morning and do not get home till five o'clock at night, day in and day out. Then there are impassable roads. There are a combination of things that need to be taken into consideration.

At the end of the day, we need to be able to get children to school on school buses, rather than having some bureaucrats virtually putting a block in front of their education. We need to be able to provide those kids with something. The alternatives for parents are to try to homeschool or use a school of distance education, or to disrupt the family by mum and the kids moving into town. That is even worse. I am sure that if we use a bit of common sense and show some understanding, we can make things much better.

Throughout the state there are a lot of regional airlines and some subsidised services, which have been very beneficial. Out my way, for quite a long time we had subsidised services, although we do not have many now. The Charleville-Roma route is important because of the activity with the gas industry. Thankfully, we do not need assistance to keep that route going. The far western route to St George, Cunnamulla and Thargomindah still gets assistance. They need that route.

I want to put in a plug for assistance for regional airlines in North Queensland. People who live in Far North Queensland, and in particular the Torres Strait, need assistance. They have to travel huge distances and we again need to look at providing assistance to those people. The same things go on up there. For instance, if a Torres Strait Islander needs dental treatment, it can cost \$800 to travel to Thursday Island

and back home again. People on the mainland would not tolerate that. We need to give those people some consideration and show them some understanding. That postcode has the highest cost of living in Australia and it needs to be remembered that the people need some assistance. Ferries do not operate in my electorate, although I could have used a few in recent times with all the floods we have had. In this debate we can cover a lot of issues and every electorate is impacted.

The bill repeals the Transport Operations (TransLink Authority) Act and inserts new sections into the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act that replace TransLink, with the state as a party to any contracts. It transfers all TransLink liabilities to the state and transfers any TransLink employees to the department. The committee looked very closely at this bill and made a recommendation that the bill be passed. I support the bill.