




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2014

TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (4.45 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise in support of the Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This wide-ranging omnibus bill contains amendments to a number of acts. Today I would like to talk about some of the key achievements of the bill. As the assistant minister for public transport, I am particularly pleased to speak to amendments in this bill that will improve outcomes for both the government and users of the public transport network. Amendments are being made to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994 which will enable the government to invest unclaimed go card balances back into public transport to help reduce cost-of-living pressures on Queenslanders.

Members may not be aware that more than 80 per cent of unclaimed funds on inactive go cards are on cards which are also unregistered. Past experience indicates that a very low level of claims is made on such funds. Currently the government's unclaimed moneys scheme requires the Department of Transport and Main Roads to transfer go card funds to the office of the Public Trustee after two years of inactivity. Members should note that the amendment only applies to go cards that are in credit but have not been used or topped up in the previous five years. Use of the funds will be subject to the approval of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and they can only be used in relation to public transport initiatives, thereby benefiting all public transport users.

Setting the time period after which unclaimed funds are transferred from go cards at five years rather than the current two years benefits occasional go card users such as visitors to Brisbane. Importantly, the amendments will reduce red tape and costs for government. In particular the ongoing administrative costs associated with transferring each go card account to the office of the Public Trustee will be avoided. The amendments will allow TransLink, under the department, to become a true one-stop shop for all go card transactions, providing a single point of contact for users. This supports the Newman government's pledge to improve front-line customer service delivery.

It is important to note that these amendments will not affect the go card holder's entitlement to a refund of the credit. They will remain entitled to claim a refund at any time whether the five-year period has elapsed or not. A go card holder can obtain a refund from TransLink in one of two ways: either directly into their bank account or by cheque by completing the go card balance transfer and refund form which is available on the TransLink website; or in cash at selected retailers in certain circumstances. The go card must be surrendered to receive a refund unless it is a registered card which has been reported lost or stolen. It is simpler and quicker for cardholders to obtain a refund from TransLink than it would be from the Public Trustee's office. This is because the only identification that is required, beyond surrendering the card and completing a refund form, is for registered cardholders to answer their security question. This will again result in less red tape for customers.

Another amendment that I would like to talk about today relates to the appointment and roles of busway safety officers and other authorised persons such as senior network officers operating on the public transport network. Indeed, it has been my privilege to attend the graduation badge ceremonies of graduating senior network officers over the last 12 months. They are extremely well trained and are

a dedicated team of customer service ambassadors who, may I add, are doing an outstanding job, particularly in the Gold Coast region. We are proud of each and every one of them.

There are currently separate processes in two different acts for appointing authorised persons and busway safety officers, resulting in unnecessary duplication of government processes. Senior network officers and TransLink transit officers are appointed as authorised persons under the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act to protect revenue and promote safety and security on the public transport network. Authorised persons issue fines and carry out other enforcement activity on bus, rail and ferry services and related infrastructure. Only busway safety officers have powers to enforce busway-specific offences. Therefore, senior network officers are also appointed as busway safety officers so that they, too, can enforce offences on the entire network including busway offences.

The amendments will streamline legislation by consolidating provisions across the public transport network so that busway safety officers will be appointed as authorised persons and authorised persons will have powers to operate across the entire network—a very sensible provision. This will remove unnecessary duplication of appointment and offence provisions and will ensure greater clarity about the roles and powers of different authorised persons on the network—yet another example of cutting the red tape from the previous 20 out of 22 years of ALP administration in this state.

Turning now to other aspects of this bill, I think it is fair to say that members would recognise the importance of being able to deliver transport infrastructure efficiently and cost-effectively. This bill supports this objective by delivering essential changes to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 and the Transport Planning and Coordination Act 1994. Very importantly, amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act will provide for watercourse crossings to be noted on land titles, supporting private sector investment in transport infrastructure that crosses over a watercourse and improving the delivery of linear transport infrastructure projects.

In a linear transport project, infrastructure will often be constructed over a watercourse. A bridge is an associated structure which supports transport infrastructure such as roads, rail, light rail or busways. Under current Queensland law, the state cannot grant any rights to hold or have any interest in property over a watercourse. Private sector investors and their financiers generally require tenure or title over the infrastructure being financed as security against the project's borrowings. Private sector rail projects have therefore experienced difficulty in securing finance for construction of linear transport infrastructure, increasing project risk and financing costs—again, terminology completely anathema to the Labor Party's way of thinking. This is a very important, sensible and long-overdue amendment.

While the Department of Transport and Main Roads was able to develop solutions to this problem for the Gold Coast Light Rail project, this was seen as an interim measure only and it was acknowledged that more permanent changes were needed to future-proof the effective delivery of infrastructure projects. Business needs certainty. Business needs confidence in the government being able to deliver full tenure, or financiers will look for other projects. It is a very competitive world out there. The amendments will provide for licences for watercourse crossings to be recorded on the land register and ensure that all types of deeds, contracts and other arrangements can be captured. This will also support private sector investment in transport infrastructure where a watercourse crossing is involved.

As all members would be aware, the Newman government is working to reduce the regulatory burden on the community and business wherever possible, and after 2½ years here we are with another example of a further amendment to an act to try to clean up their mess. It will continue.

From 1 October 2014 the need to have registration labels on light vehicles such as the family car will end. The bill supports this change by amending the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to deter unregistered vehicles and vehicles without compulsory third-party insurance being used on the road. This will be achieved by allowing automatic numberplate recognition on camera systems to be used to detect these offences.

Police officers and transport inspectors employed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads are currently able to stop unregistered and uninsured vehicles and issue an infringement notice on the roadside. The sensible use of an automatic numberplate recognition camera system to detect these offences and issue infringement notices will automate this process, meaning a reduced amount of time spent by police and transport inspectors physically intercepting these vehicles.

In the moments remaining to me I will correct the record in relation to some of the issues raised by the previous speaker, the member for South Brisbane—service contracts, amendments to section 51 and QBIC consultation. No doubt some of these issues will be picked up by the minister in his reply. Over the past 12 months I have met several times with the members of QBIC in relation to many, many issues, including potential reforms to the industry. In fact, only a few months ago I attended their conference at Hervey Bay with the local member. I stayed there until about 2.30 in the morning addressing their concerns. The little leftie engine who thinks she can has a long way to go if she thinks she can solve our transport problems.