




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PERSONALISED TRANSPORT OMBUDSMAN BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.03 pm): It gives me great pleasure to speak to this bill. Like the member for Traeger, who spoke about the need for new ticketing solutions in his electorate, my electorate of Gregory does not have a public transport system that needs ticketing solutions, but I understand that it could be helpful when people of my electorate go to Brisbane or other major cities so that they can adapt to new ticketing solutions.

Before us we have a bill that creates the Personalised Transport Ombudsman, who will have no power under the law and is a bureaucratic appointment. Stakeholders have said that they do not agree with this bill. Those stakeholders include the Transport Workers' Union, the Taxi Council and even the Ride Share Drivers' Association, which has said that this bill is not good. Therefore, why are we progressing with a bill when the majority of stakeholders who have given input into the consideration of this bill have said that it is not a good bill? This bill needs to be taken back and redrafted. The Personalised Transport Ombudsman needs to have the power to be able to do the job that needs to be done.

I also want to talk about an issue that has been around for quite a few years that has had a major economic impact on small businesses throughout Queensland. In Brisbane, and even here in Townsville, we have seen the taxi industry—mums and dads who have operated a taxi as their business and as their superannuation—decrease in value. To give an understanding of the situation to the House, recently I met with a person who owned a couple of licences. I was asked by Cecilia and Ben Hooper, who operate the taxi industry in Emerald, to catch up with this person because they were worried about him. I took this person for a coffee. To see a man who was quite successful, who had worked hard for a long time, in tears while we were having coffee because his industry had been taken away from him was quite heartbreaking. We definitely need to make sure that, if we introduce bills relating to the taxi industry and the rideshare industry, those bills count. They need to count.

It is considered that the establishment of the Personalised Transport Ombudsman is an attempt by the government to shift responsibility for settling such issues. However, the limited powers assigned to the position suggests that these issues, including complaints about government policy and legislation, or even alleged offences under the relevant transport legislation, will not be investigated. Why are we proceeding with this bill when we have stakeholders, the industry itself, saying that this position will be a toothless tiger?

Taxpayers' money for Queensland is a finite resource. The people sitting in the gallery here in Townsville and listening to us expect us to use their taxpayer dollars in the most efficient and best way possible. They do not want us using taxpayers' dollars for an office that will be a toothless tiger. We have a responsibility to these people in the gallery and other people in Townsville and North Queensland, who work damned hard to provide us with money for the Queensland economy, to make sure that we are spending their taxpayer dollars in the right way. The last thing the people of Townsville and North Queensland want is someone or a government using their taxpayer dollars on something that is not going to achieve the result it was destined to achieve.

Based on the feedback from those stakeholders who provided a submission to the Transport and Public Works Committee, they see the role of the Personalised Transport Ombudsman as being a waste of money and little more than a toothless tiger. That is damning. When industry stakeholders such as the Taxi Council and the Transport Workers' Union and even the Ride Share Drivers' Association of Australia indicate that the whole legislation is flawed, the government has to go back to the drawing board and start again to make sure that we get this right.

Finally, I commend the remarks made by the member for Traeger in relation to the new ticketing system. It will be of benefit to people in regional Queensland. I would also like the minister to continue to look at regional airfares. That is a big issue here just like ticketing in Brisbane is a big issue. We have to make sure that all Queenslanders throughout this great state have connectivity to make sure that everybody gets a fair go.