




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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PERSONALISED TRANSPORT OMBUDSMAN BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (12.40 pm): It is a great pleasure to speak to the Personalised Transport Ombudsman Bill. Public transport is well supported in Townsville. I thank Minister Bailey for the support he has given not only me as the chair of the public transport committee but also the members for Thuringowa and Mundingburra. We have met many times with the minister with concerns around public transport. This was highlighted by the mayor of Townsville, Mayor Jenny Hill, at the beginning of this year. We spoke with Minister Bailey and said, 'Minister, we would like to develop a public transport committee. We would like to listen to the concerns of people right across Townsville with regard to public transport.' We got two thumbs up from Minister Bailey, and away we went. To our first meeting we invited all of the stakeholders in public transport right around the city. The mayor, representatives from TransLink, officers from the Department of Transport and Main Roads, bus drivers, taxidrivers and Uber drivers turned up to that meeting. They wanted to tell us exactly what was happening with public transport in Townsville, and we listened. We were then able to report back to Minister Bailey about their concerns.

We knew that we needed to do something about public transport in Townsville so on 13 May this year TransLink was introduced into Townsville, with public transport infrastructure and services featuring the TransLink brand. We rebranded our public transport system in Townsville to show the Townsville public that we were making the changes they suggested. We were not prepared to hang on to the same old brand, trot out the same old behaviours and expect the public to think this was a good thing. We needed to do something different, and we did.

We rebranded. That rebranding has gone over sensationally. The colours on the buses have changed. Public transport users really look for the new buses they see driving through our city. The buses are white with a green front and back. Thanks to the minister three new buses have already been delivered. We are hearing that there is a fight over who gets to drive those new buses because the drivers absolutely love driving them. The customers also love getting on those buses and travelling around our city.

That is not the only thing we have done. We have also introduced a 24-hour-a-day TransLink website and app. That has enabled us to take complaints from people in Townsville about their public transport system. In the first week we received five phone calls about what was happening with public transport. Three of those calls related to changes to the timetable. People in Townsville can report concerns and talk to people in TransLink about what is happening on the public transport system. That is important. The Palaszczuk government delivers for people, particularly the people of Townsville.

The website also provides our customers with greater access to information and allows them to plan their journeys in advance. More and more, Townsville is becoming a tourism destination. Today we heard exactly that from Minister Jones. More international students are coming to Townsville. We need to support their travel across our great city via our public transport system. With the website they will be able to plan their journey in advance and go from there. We were finally able to deliver a \$4 million bus hub in Townsville. That was a long time coming.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr STEWART: I take the interjection from the member for Sandgate, a former minister for transport and main roads. We worked together on this. We listened to basically every stakeholder who came along to those meetings. We also listened to the mayor, who said to us, 'We want to deliver this. If you give us the money, we will deliver this fantastic bus hub. It will aptly suit the people of Townsville. It will change and activate Ogden Street.' I invite each and every member of this chamber to go to Ogden Street to see what the Townsville City Council has built with the \$4 million given to it by the Palaszczuk government for this bus hub. It has done a sensational job of transforming Ogden Street, which was an old, derelict, out-of-the-way street. It has activated that CBD area. There are people coming and going quite often from that area.

Most importantly, when we talked to the council about where to locate the bus hub, they said to us, 'Be forward thinking. We want to locate this bus hub as close to the new stadium as we possibly can, because it will be a key, pivotal point for public transport.' I thank members for coming to Townsville. They would have seen the construction of the new Townsville stadium—built by locals for locals. If they have not yet seen it, they have been walking around with their eyes closed. It is a major feature of our city. We located it there to ensure interconnection between the bus hub, our transport system and the new stadium. I thank all of the workers on our great stadium. I look forward to the opening.

We have also been developing new bus routes to make sure we have interconnection with the Magnetic Island ferry. People who live on beautiful Magnetic Island, eight kilometres to the north of us—member for Burleigh, if you turn that way and open your eyes you will see it—use that ferry all the time. People come here for race week. It is a great place for a holiday. A great ferry service runs between Townsville and Magnetic Island, but it was not necessarily connecting with buses. From working with SeaLink and TransLink, we have been able to connect those services. It is absolutely seamless. Customers love using that service to get across to Magnetic Island and unwind.

While I am speaking about Magnetic Island, two of the bus drivers there were nominated for the state's best driver. I say to them: well done. The first impression people get when they come to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Member for Townsville, return to the bill, if you would, please.

Mr STEWART: Absolutely. The Queensland government has made changes to our bus timetable to complement this initiative, delivering better reliability and improved connections. The new CBD bus hub is expected to revitalise our city. Some 255 workers have been inducted into the bus hub site.

Townsville mums and dads said to our public transport committee: 'We want to have a go card, like they have in Brisbane. Why can't we have a go card?' We are going one better. We are taking the next step. People will be able to use mobile phones and smart watches to travel on those buses. I say to the parents and kids in the audience watching parliament in action: instead of having a go card like they have in Brisbane, we are going better. That is thanks to Minister Bailey recognising that Townsville is one of the key sites where mobile phones can be used for ticketing. This is a great excuse for a lot of kids to go to their parents and say, 'Mum and Dad, I need a smartphone. If I am going to catch a bus, I need a smartphone.' There you go, kids; there is a Christmas present coming for you.

This is about using the technology. It is about recognising what our future looks like. It is about recognising our future leaders such as our young kids who are sitting in the audience here today. It is about recognising that the technology that they will use supersedes what we have today. It is about making sure that our transport system through being able to use smartphones, Apple watches and the like to buy a ticket to travel on transport not only reassures them that we are catering for the best of their needs but also reassures their parents no matter whether or not they have money in their pocket, because I have stood on bus lines many times where kids have said, 'Sorry, Mr Bus Driver, but I don't have any money.' They will now be able to use their smartphones or their Apple watches to be able to travel on that transport. As a parent, that gives me a lot more security and a lot more peace of mind. I commend the bill to the House and thank the committee for the work it has done on this issue.