



Speech By  
**Amy MacMahon**


**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2023

**MOTION**

**Cost of Living**

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (5.11 pm): Access to public transport determines how much money Queenslanders have left for groceries at the end of the week or whether people can get to work or school on time. It determines how connected we can be as a community. Transport dictates where we can work, the friends and family we can visit, the doctors who can treat us and how much time we have with family at the end of the day. Yet transport in Queensland, especially public transport, is so far behind the rest of the world.

Despite what the minister has said, for most Queenslanders, we still have a public transport system that is woefully behind other countries. We have designed our public transport system in such a dismal way that, for the vast majority of Queenslanders, the cost and effort of individually buying, fuelling, servicing, insuring and parking your car is still the only choice. This is an enormous burden on the household budgets for many Queenslanders. Fuel was at \$2.30 over the weekend. Car insurance premiums are up from last year and, despite the rising cost of private vehicle ownership, our dismal public transport system means that it still is not a viable alternative for the majority of Queenslanders.

Queensland's public transport system, even in the south-east, provides some of the poorest coverage of any public transport network in the world. Much of the network is slow and infrequent. If people have limited mobility, good luck finding a train or bus station that they can access, or services that announce the stops that are coming up. For all this, Queenslanders also have the extraordinary privilege of paying some of the highest costs for public transport anywhere in the world. For many people, there is no choice but to take public transport—no matter the cost or inconvenience. It is not a choice for kids whose parents are working early morning shifts or workers who have medical conditions who are not able to drive or workers who are struggling to cover the cost of rent, let alone the cost of car repayments.

For many people, public transport is their only way to get around and so investing in a better public transport system and making it free really is a no-brainer. It is something that we could afford and that we could be doing in Queensland. Free, fast and frequent public transport would provide enormous cost-of-living relief to existing users and to future users who would be able to rely on their cars less. Encouraging new patrons with better and expanded services free of charge would provide enormous benefits, not only to those who make the switch but to the rest of the community as well. Every time someone chooses to take the bus instead of the car it reduces congestion, it reduces the environmental costs and, combined with a walk to the bus stop, it offers health benefits as well.

The better our public transport is, the more people will use it and the better our roads will be for everyone else who needs them. It is better for those people who do not have a choice about whether or not they drive—tradies who need their tools at work, nurses doing home visits or pensioners who need to drive to the shops. Best of all, free, fast and frequent public transport essentially pays for itself. When people catch public transport, they are often on their way to spend money or make money—both

of which support local economies and benefit the government's bottom line. Often people are on their way to see loved ones, to volunteer at sporting clubs or to watch a gig or a game of footy. Public transport makes our communities more vibrant, boosts small businesses and makes our communities more connected as well.

One way that the government could pay for free public transport would be to scrap the \$2.7 billion Gabba redevelopment. This could fund free public transport in Queensland for around seven years. This would be a much better investment for Queenslanders than a single stadium that will come at the cost of a school and a park that has growing opposition from Queenslanders who are appalled that, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, a single stadium would be the focus of a Labor government. The government could easily save that money and put it into a public transport system that is fit for purpose and free for Queenslanders to use. Right now public transport is so inconvenient and expensive that car ownership is a rational choice for so many people.

In my community, the Save Our Ferries team have been campaigning for more ferry services in Kangaroo Point. Locals have been campaigning for the 192 to run on nights and weekends and have been pushing for intersuburban services that mean people will get between suburbs without having to go into the CBD. Queenslanders deserve free, fast and frequent public transport and Queenslanders with disabilities deserve access to public transport. I commend my colleague for the motion.