




Speech By  
**Bart Mellish**

**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2023

### **TOW TRUCK BILL**

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (11.31 am): I rise to speak on the Tow Truck Bill. I thank the minister for introducing the bill and his department for the significant work that has gone into its construction. I acknowledge the committee for looking at the bill, particularly the committee chair, the member for Kurwongbah. I served on his committee in the last term so I know that he always looks at these matters very diligently and thoroughly. He is a great chair to have when dealing with transport matters. I am sure that over the years he has had a few of his cars on tow trucks, for quite harmless reasons I am sure. I know he is a big car fan.

I am sure that the chair of the committee would be a big backer of many aspects of the bill, particularly the committee's recommendation that the minister convene a working group of all interested tow truck industry stakeholders. That is really important. Having peak industry representation on a range of issues helps both government and opposition to draft policy positions and legislation that impact positively in the community and ensure all interests are looked at. When regulating an industry, there is always a balance to be found between meeting commercial interests and ensuring consumer protection measures are in place.

The towing industry would have very tight margins and at times it would not be easy work. They perform a service for the community. To remain viable, they need to charge reasonable fees for their services. At the same time, often motorists are at their most vulnerable after a crash and the government has a role in ensuring that they are protected from any predatory practices by unscrupulous operators in the industry. To achieve the required balance, the bill makes provision for the regulation of a number of towing fees. These include regulating the maximum fees for towing a vehicle from a crash scene or from a private property. These fees will be prescribed in the new regulation.

About 20 years ago, I needed a car towed up the Toowoomba range from near the McDonald's at Gatton. It cost me about \$500, which was a lot of money for a poor uni student. It took me a fair bit of time to pay that back. It is good to see that, in the legislation before us, the maximum fee ensures that motorists will pay a fair amount and will not need to consider competing quotes at what could be a very stressful time. This is about competing quotes and it is also about those areas where there is not much competition. We want to make sure that people are not exploited.

In 2018, the government introduced significant reforms to private property towing in response to community concerns about practices. Those reforms included maximum regulated fees, including capped storage fees, to ensure motorists were not subjected to excessive fees when their vehicles were removed from private property. Whilst that cap on storage fees for vehicles towed from private property is being maintained, the cap will not apply to other regulated towing services such as crash towing.

In my area of the north side, Gympie Road often tops the big insurers' lists of dangerous intersections. There are a number of pretty bad accident hotspots, the intersections of Gympie and Hamilton roads and Gympie and Webster roads to name just two. For many years I have been pushing to find solutions to prevent crashes and, therefore, prevent the need for tow truck services. Traffic

congestion is a really big issue and it was really good to hear other members mentioning this as well. Accidents are a major contributor to road congestion. As anyone listening to the ABC or other radio stations in the morning will know, if you hear that there is a crash on Gympie Road you know that traffic will be banked up for kilometres.

Therefore, ahead of the budget this year, I was really pleased to hear the Treasurer announce \$35 million for a detailed study into the Gympie Road bypass, which is a solution that I have been pushing for over a number of years. That bypass would benefit the entire north side of Brisbane. There are potential cost savings and time savings for locals. The number of tow trucks we would get off Gympie Road as a result of that project would be outstanding. It would be great to see that happen. In future years I would love to be here and say that Gympie Road no longer tops the RACQ's or other insurers' lists for the most dangerous road in Queensland and the most number of crashes.

Turning back to the bill specifically, these measures will not mean that a tow truck business can charge any amount for the storage of a crashed vehicle. The new regulation will retain the requirement that a customer must be advised of the storage charges to be applied at least 48 hours before the charges are due to commence. That will give the customer the opportunity to explore their options and have their vehicle transferred. Therefore, while industry will be able to continue to charge reasonable fees for vehicle storage, consumers will have knowledge and insight into what those charges will be.

I support the bill. I think it is an outstanding bill. Well done to the minister and to the committee for its inquiry and recommendations. I thank everyone who has contributed to the bill.