




Speech By
Hon. Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2024

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL
Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)
Appropriation Bill

Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee, Report

 **Hon. BJ MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services) (12.19 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the estimates report of the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee. I was pleased to spend four hours on a Tuesday evening with the committee.

In the transport portfolio our record investment of \$37.4 billion in QTRIP is delivering the transport infrastructure for our growing state and the cost-of-living relief that Queenslanders need most. Right across the state we are investing in transformational road, rail, public and active transport projects. We have a rail revolution well underway in South-East Queensland with Cross River Rail, Sunshine Coast direct, Beerburrum to Nambour and Logan and Gold Coast Faster Rail all steaming ahead. I was very pleased to talk about those projects at length. The Miles government additionally has billions allocated to the Bruce Highway over the forward estimates. From 2027 we will invest \$250 million per annum on the Bruce—an increase of \$50 million every year.

It is, of course, not just our big transport build that is transforming travel across the state; our nation-leading 50-cent fares initiative is saving Queenslanders money and boosting public transport use around the state right now. In the first week alone Queenslanders saved over \$7 million and, as of yesterday, more than \$14 million is back in the pockets of hardworking Queenslanders. That is more money to put towards the mortgage, rent or groceries or to put into savings. Patronage throughout South-East Queensland during the first week of the trial was up to 98.4 per cent on pre-COVID levels—a clear indication to us that Queenslanders are keen to make the most of this almost free travel. The last weekend of 50-cent fares was the biggest weekend of public transport in South-East Queensland of all time—breaking the record set only the weekend before.

Airtrain passengers are also making the most of half-price fares, with an 18 per cent increase in passenger numbers in the first week, as well as a 69 per cent increase in airport staff tickets. For the very first time airport staff tickets are now available at Central station, with half-price weekly tickets available at Central and the airport stations for the 20,000 workers who commute to the Brisbane airports every day. We are pulling the levers to ensure Queenslanders get better value for money from a dud deal struck by the former dud LNP government.

This government is also cutting rego by 20 per cent. Queenslanders will now see this discount on their rego renewals for the next 12 months. For those who might have just paid their rego, they will see it on their next bill, regardless of whether that is three, six or 12 months from now. It is something that all Queenslanders who drive a light vehicle will benefit from. Across South-East Queensland alone, 20 per cent off rego is set to save drivers a massive \$239 million.

We are listening to Queenslanders in every pocket of our state to deliver essential cost-of-living relief. It is no secret that Gold Coasters love using public transport. Light rail was the first mode to return to pre-COVID patronage levels, and its uptake during 50-cent fares has skyrocketed. Gold Coast commuters are well and truly making the most of our 50-cent fare trial, with light rail trips up 19.6 per cent and train trips to and from the Gold Coast up 28.6 per cent.

Despite the massive savings being made by commuters, the member for Mermaid Beach has labelled our 50-cent fares a strain on the state economy. In a newsletter to the Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce, the member for Mermaid Beach said the Labor government initiative 'will only add to the strain on the state economy and is contributing to further cost-of-living pressures'.

Who can forget the comments by his Gold Coast neighbour the member for Burleigh who three years ago told the media in a bizarre rant that public transport will be obsolete in 10 years. Back then the Leader of the Opposition ducked and weaved and failed to take responsibility for the ludicrous comments by members of his own party. Why did the Leader of the Opposition support light rail in 2021 but has since told Queenslanders that in government he will order a complete review of stage 4 of light rail and send it back to the drawing board.

Just like his dealings while the sole director of SET Solutions, the Leader of the Opposition is not giving Queenslanders the whole picture. Rather than take responsibility for his actions, the Leader of the Opposition has refused to disclose hush money payments made years after his failed small business, SET Solutions, collapsed. If the Leader of the Opposition cannot be trusted to run a small business he cannot be trusted to run the state.

As we are talking about budget estimates, the Leader of the Opposition needs to break his silence about his own books and the budget estimates in those. Who was the hush money for? Who does the Leader of the Opposition still owe money to?

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Pause the clock. Members, I cannot hear the minister. He is not taking interjections. I cannot hear if he is being relevant because I cannot actually hear him. Can we have some quiet in the chamber.

Mr MELLISH: We have a solid protection racket over there for the Leader of the Opposition who does not want to answer questions, who does not want to hear examination of his own budget history and who has questions to answer.