




Speech By
Hon. Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Thornton, Dr M, AM; Public Transport; Pitt, Hon. C

 **Hon. BJ MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads and Minister for Digital Services) (10.17 am): I would like to start by associating myself with the comments of previous speakers regarding Dr Merle Thornton. Merle was a Queensland great who dared to challenge societal norms and do things differently. Cross River Rail named one of the tunnel-boring machines after her in honour of her trailblazing spirit. Vale, Merle.

More directly onto transport matters, the Miles government's 50-cent fares trial has been an outstanding success so far. It is an Australian-first initiative that has already saved Queenslanders more than \$15 million. Patronage has increased across all modes, with South-East Queensland public transport use reaching 99 per cent of pre-COVID levels. I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering real cost-of-living relief, keeping money in the pockets of hardworking Queenslanders.

Already public transport records have been broken across our network and some of the numbers are outstanding. For example, the latest data from Tuesday, 20 August shows: buses up 9.5 per cent on last year, ferries up 31 per cent on last year, light rail up 20 per cent on last year and rail up 15 per cent on last year. 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.

It is not just the weekday commuters who are benefiting. We are seeing thousands more Queenslanders out and about using public transport on the weekend to visit family and friends, head to the footy or head to the beach, all for just 50 cents. The past two weekends have been the busiest two weekends ever on our public transport network. Saturday just gone was the busiest ever Saturday with over 400,000 trips, up more than 23 per cent on last year; and Sunday was the busiest ever Sunday on the network with almost 300,000 trips, up 22 per cent on last year.

None of this would be possible without our hardworking transport staff. I want to take the opportunity to extend a sincere thank you to our Translink, Queensland Rail and TMR staff and our bus, tram and ferry delivery partners who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes and on the front lines for months to ensure this trial was a success. Our transport workers are the backbone of our network, helping to get you where you need to go safely and efficiently. As the Minister for Transport I could not be prouder to back our transport cost-of-living initiatives. It is only a Labor government that will continue to listen to Queenslanders to help deliver the relief they need when they need it most.

Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on a long and substantial career. It has been a pleasure to work with you and for you in a variety of roles and I wish you all of the best for whatever comes next.