




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

---

Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

### **TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.37 pm): In rising to address this bill, which the LNP does not oppose, I want to say that this is yet again a bill full of missed opportunities. The first missed opportunity is providing certainty to employees of the Department of Transport and Main Roads whose positions will be impacted when the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator assumes direct responsibility for the delivery of heavily vehicle regulation services in Queensland. Under its National Services Transition program the NHVR has been progressively assuming the responsibility in other jurisdictions, commencing in South Australia in 2017. In fact, Queensland will be the final participating jurisdiction to transition regulatory services to the NHVR. That means our minister and our Department of Transport and Main Roads have had plenty of opportunity to learn how to smooth the transition path, based on the experience in every other state.

As part of the transition, up to 135 full-time-equivalent Queensland TMR staff who currently undertake heavy vehicle enforcement will be able to transfer to the NHVR. This bill enables the minister to transfer the staff and the vehicles while protecting staff entitlements. TMR's General Manager of Land Transport Safety and Regulation, Mrs Robinson, has advised that, following an extensive consultation process with the impacted staff and the Together union, departmental staff will go to the regulator on an entirely voluntary basis. However, the opposition has been contacted by TMR staff, as the shadow minister pointed out, saying that it does not tell the whole story. According to these staff, if they choose not to go to the NHVR and a position is not available within TMR, they are being classed as displaced employees and are being forced to consider relocations to a different part of the state or else to leave the Public Service altogether. I imagine that this is particularly so for heavy vehicle inspectors, as this is a highly specialised role, and no doubt other positions will be impacted. The affected employees say that the consultation been marked with poor communication by TMR which has increased stress and uncertainty. The LNP is calling on the minister to act urgently to give these employees and their families certainty.

The rest of the bill is concerned in one way or another with matters pertaining to road safety. Indeed, improving road safety is one of the objectives of this bill. Again, I see a missed opportunity in the patchwork approach. A number of people have been affected by injury and maiming. The road toll in 2023 was 277 fatalities. The road toll statistics during the COVID lockdown years must be considered somewhat artificial. However, we can say with certainty that in 2023 the road toll was higher, by 58 fatalities, than the pre-COVID road toll in 2019—a 26 per cent increase. The next highest road toll increase is in Victoria, which suffered a much smaller increase of 11 per cent. In contrast, New South Wales and Western Australia both achieved decreases.

Clearly, in Queensland we are doing something wrong. However, there are several things that we can do. Road maintenance is undoubtedly a contributor to the problem in my neck of the woods. We seem to be continually fighting to see where road maintenance funding goes and continually arguing against insufficient road funding. This week, Mackay's *Daily Mercury* reported that the \$400 million upgrade to Central Queensland's beef road corridors, which I am a big supporter of, scheduled to

commence next to year, has now been pushed back to 2028 or the never-never. Those are vital arterial roads for Queensland's highly productive agriculture and mining industries so they earn a lot of dollars for the Queensland economy. They are also used daily by school buses, local residents and tourists. In 2022 the federal LNP government committed to the funding. It took Senator Matt Canavan's forensic questioning at a Senate estimates hearing to discover that it has evaporated.

I can tell the House now that the roads that we are talking about are important to Queensland. I travel those roads all the time. When you drive from Emerald out to Alpha, the stretch between Emerald and Bogantungan, just before you get to the Drummond Range, is desperately in need of fixing. Not only do a lot of trucks use that road; so do a lot of tourists. People who have only driven around Brisbane will buy a brand new Land Cruiser and a big caravan and go out on those roads and we have seen issues where people have come to grief. The state Labor government needs to make sure that we get the beef road corridors up and going—not in 2028; start it next year—because they are vital for our agricultural communities.

There are other issues. For instance, the scuttlebutt in Central Queensland is that the Callide Power Station repairs were delayed because CQ bridges could not support the weight of the new generator that they needed to transport from the port to the powerhouse. This is important. Not only is it affecting roads; it is affecting power. We have to make sure that regional Queensland has suitable roads for locals and also the agricultural industry and the mining industry. I call on the minister to look at the \$400 million beef road corridors commitment and put it back on the table. Come June when the budget is handed down, I want to see a commitment to Central Queensland that the beef road corridors are back on the agenda. That is important.

In my part of the world, inadequate road funding is seen as a major contributor to the road toll. We have done a lot around logbook hours for learner drivers but we have done nothing around towing licences for grey nomads. I was horrified to read an expert opinion that 75 per cent of caravans are so overloaded with gear that their insurance is void if they are involved in an accident or cause one. Someone who might normally tootle around the suburbs of Brisbane holds a driver's licence that allows them to hook a fully loaded and modified caravan to a V8 and take off on rural roads. Essentially, they are driving a high-powered unbalanced long vehicle. We have to make sure that those roads are put back on the agenda.

Finally, I wish the minister all the best. I implore him to, please, put this back on the agenda for next year and get the federal government to commit to the \$400 million in funding so that we can start to improve roads in Central Queensland.