




Speech By
Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Toll Roads; Western Queensland, Rail Services

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (2.49 pm): Last night we saw a shameful act by the government that means it is now easier to jack up tolls or introduce new ones. After 5 pm, after the sun had set, we saw the introduction of these amendments. They were passed by 9 pm. These laws mean the government can slap a toll on any road or hike up an existing road toll without fear, favour or proper consultation. Why did they smuggle this into a bill when it is completely unrelated? What was the urgency? What is in the budget that they had to smuggle this in now?

They say it does not include the Story Bridge, but under these laws councils gain the power to declare tolls in stages. It opens the door to make it easier for Brisbane City Council to put a toll on the Story Bridge. We know it is in disrepair. We know it has been poorly managed by council. Is this the LNP Brisbane City Council and the Crisafulli government's plan to pass costs on to Queenslanders? We know they do not care about the cost of living. We know they are talking down the cost of living in the lead-up to this budget. How can we trust anything this Premier says? We heard him say there would be no new stadiums. He broke that promise. What dodgy deal has been done between the Lord Mayor and the Premier?

This morning the minister could not explain why Queenslanders were not consulted on these amendments. At times, he could not even remember he is the transport minister. We still do not have a clear explanation. We got a couple of paragraphs at most and three minutes of screaming. It was very disappointing. It was also disappointing to hear this morning that the transport minister refuses to rule out reducing rail services in Western and regional Queensland. There are concerns that these connections to the Outback could be cut in the upcoming budget. This morning I asked the transport minister to guarantee that *Spirit of the Outback*, *Inlander*, *Westlander* and tilt train services will not be scaled back. For three minutes he failed to answer the question. As well as being a linchpin of the state's Outback tourism industry, Queensland Rail travel services also give rural, regional and remote Queenslanders vital access to health, education and job services in regional centres.

This coincides with recent news that the government knocked back major overhauls for tilt trains in Maryborough, putting more than 100 jobs on the line. The transport minister needs to give Queenslanders a direct answer on the future of Outback rail services. Any cuts will be a cruel blow not only to tourism operators in the regions but also those who rely on these trains to visit family and access medical appointments. This government has cut vital maintenance to rail services in regional Queensland and now they cannot even guarantee they will continue. More than 600,000 people took regional and rural transport last year and now they are facing the very real possibility of being left stranded at the station.

Maybe we should not ask the transport minister these questions. It is pretty clear that the Deputy Premier is the one running transport. We have seen this before with the cuts to rail to Maroochydore. We have seen this with the Gold Coast Light Rail mess. Is he behind this push for tolls? The transport minister clearly does not know what he is on about when he was trying to answer questions this morning. Should we be asking the Deputy Premier these questions about transport? At the moment, it is clear that no-one from the government is looking after it.