



Speech by

Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard Thursday, 13 May 2004

TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.04 p.m.): I, too, want to speak in support of the Transport and Other Legislation Amendment Bill brought to the House by the Minister for Transport, Paul Lucas. In speaking to the bill, I want to very strongly endorse the comments of my friend and colleague the member for Bundamba about the Ipswich Motorway.

Before I get on to those matters, I want to deal with the aspects of the bill that relate to the TransLink program—a program that has been in development for more than five years in south-east Queensland and which will, for the first time, give us a genuinely integrated south-east Queensland public transport system of ferries, trains and buses. One of the big issues on the political agenda at the moment is the rapid rate of population growth in south-east Queensland. There is no doubt that, while we do need to build more road transport infrastructure, in the long term if we are going to have a genuinely economically and environmentally sustainable community we need to have a greater proportion of the journeys undertaken in south-east Queensland undertaken by public transport. For that reason TransLink, which will come into effect on 1 July, is incredibly timely.

Ipswich currently has a comprehensive public transport system, elements of which, however, are underutilised. The rail service is exceptional. It is a quality, well utilised service which provides clean, efficient, on time trains right throughout the day and night. So far this financial year there have been 400,000 journeys on the Ipswich line.

There is also a good quality bus service in Ipswich provided by Westside bus company to which the state government provides an annual subsidy of \$1.2 million for the provision of bus services. We have to understand that, without that subsidy, there would simply be no public bus service in Ipswich.

One of the elements of TransLink is that the subsidy for public buses will be increased by another \$750,000 a year, on top of the existing \$1.2 million. That will provide better morning services, no service will be provided less than every hour and it will provide better services on Saturday mornings. Importantly, there are currently about 550,000 journeys a year on the Westside Bus Service in Ipswich. This is something that forms an important part of many people's lives, particularly those who, often for financial reasons, do not have their own vehicles.

TransLink gives us the opportunity to better integrate both ticketing and timetables and will make a huge difference in terms of the quality and usability of Ipswich's public transport system. Importantly, in addition to that, it will also allow us in Ipswich for the first time to promote the public transport system as a single network. It is my view that there is a huge capacity to increase the utilisation of the bus service if we only promote it. I am one of the many people in Ipswich who live on a bus route but do not know when the buses go by and where they are going. There has never been any serious effort to promote bus transport to the people of Ipswich. Now we have TransLink we will, for the first time, be able to genuinely promote the concept to people that they can walk out their front door, buy one ticket and that will take them by bus, ferry or train to anywhere in south-east Queensland.

As the local member, I am disappointed to say that I do quite frequently have complaints about the quality of elements of the bus service. I have complaints that the buses do not run on time and occasionally

that the drivers are not sufficiently sympathetic to people who have things like mobility problems. This has been a constant source of frustration to me and I know to many people in the community, particularly the older members of the community. It is simply not good enough.

I take this opportunity today to call, on the public record, for Westside Bus Service to provide a more courteous and more timely service for Ipswich people. I do not think that that is too much to ask. It is something that I have consistently asked for in my dealings with Westside and it is something that the Department of Transport has made extremely clear it simply expects. Ipswich people have every right to expect a courteous, efficient, timely bus service. Given that the state government puts \$1.2 million a year into that service, as the local member I have every right to say that we as a government representing a community expect that quality of service as well.

I now want to talk about the Ipswich Motorway, as the member for Bundamba did. The Ipswich Motorway was one of the major issues that I raised in my maiden speech. At that time I said that it was dangerous, ugly, congested and potholed. Since I made my maiden speech, six more people have died on that road, with the most recent fatality occurring just a couple of weeks ago. The local paper, the *Queensland Times* started counting the cost only six months ago and already has reached \$5 million.

The Ipswich Motorway is strangling the Ipswich economy and it is a constant source of frustration for Ipswich people. The member for Bundamba argued very strongly that that \$5 million is, at best, generous to the motorway. It is costing our economy and it is costing individuals often hundreds of dollars and sometimes their jobs, because driving on the Ipswich Motorway is a day-by-day proposition and it is dangerous. Probably the greatest source of frustration for people is not only that they do not know when it will be congested; they do not know when it will be completely and utterly blocked. It is not at all uncommon for Ipswich people to leave for work and not just, as the member for Bundamba said, get there late but in fact turn around and go home because they could not get through the Ipswich Motorway at all. Ipswich is the fourth largest city in Queensland. It has a population of 135,000 people. It is the third largest city in south-east Queensland. More than half of its population works in Brisbane on any given day. However, quite frequently these people simply cannot get to work because of the desperate state of this road.

As we all know, this road is a 100 per cent federal government responsibility. It is part of the National Highway and has been for decades. Therefore, there is no argument that the federal government, that is, the Howard government, is not absolutely 100 per cent responsible for this road.

There is strong agreement in the Ipswich community that the Ipswich Motorway needs upgrading to six lanes. All the consultation and all the planning for that to happen has been done. This agreement is not just a Labor Party thing. It cuts across the community and it cuts across party lines. The Ipswich City Council, the Liberal Brisbane City Council, the state members of parliament Bruce Flegg, Don Livingstone, Jo-Ann Miller and I, and the RACQ, which is not political at all, agree that the Ipswich Motorway must be upgraded to six lanes.

The man standing between Ipswich and its desperately need motorway upgrade is the federal member for Blair, Cameron Thompson. For a number of years now Cameron has consistently put forward the bizarre proposition that the way to fix this road is to build half a bypass from somewhere around Dinmore to, perhaps, somewhere around Wacol, although we do not really know. The proposition includes not one or two but four bridges across the Brisbane River, yet it still only bypasses half of the Ipswich Motorway.

One day last week I was driving home from Brisbane and was completely stopped for a good while on the Ipswich Motorway. I ended up going home via Springfield on the Centenary Highway, which the state government is going to extend to create a genuine alternative route to Ipswich.

Mrs Miller: At a cost of \$120 million.

Ms NOLAN: At a cost of \$120 million, as the member for Bundamba says. I took that route because the Ipswich Motorway was blocked and the traffic was stopped. Importantly, the traffic was stopped at Wacol and that happens all the time. Cameron Thompson's proposal for half a bypass would not stop that from happening. It is half a bypass that would involve the costs associated with building four bridges across the Brisbane River. That is an absurd cost. Cameron Thompson has continued to campaign for this ludicrous option for a number of years now. In the Ipswich community it is becoming increasingly clear that he is the man who is holding up the federal government's funding of this road, and he is the man who is standing between Ipswich and its desperately needed upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway.

Mr Shine: I hope they remember that later in the year.

Ms NOLAN: I think they will. Ipswich needs this motorway upgrade. Cameron Thompson is stopping it. I think the conclusion is a simple one.

Mrs Miller: He's got to go.

Ms NOLAN: This road has to happen and he has to go.