

South-East Queensland Congestion Relief Youth Bill 2008

Explanatory Notes

Short title of the Youth Bill

The short title of the Youth Bill is the *South-East Queensland Congestion Relief Youth Bill 2008*.

Objectives of the Youth Bill

The objective of the Youth Bill is to relieve traffic congestion in South-East Queensland by implementing a Free Movement Collection Scheme supplemented with improved public transport and other congestion reduction mechanisms.

South-East Queensland has, in the past few decades, attracted more than half a million people to relocate from other Australian cities and around the world. Over the next 2 decades the region is expected to accommodate an additional 1 million new residents feeding one of the strongest State economies in Australia.

People are flocking to South-East Queensland to escape the gridlocked cities of Sydney and Melbourne for the relaxed subtropical lifestyle in South-East Queensland. This lifestyle is fast disappearing because of the unsustainable demand from personal motor vehicles on our roads. Congestion is an inevitable consequence of a booming economy and a booming population. This does not mean that we can ignore the problem. If left unchecked the problem of congestion will get worse, and pose significant costs to our economy, our society and our environment.

Every year Australia is losing billions of dollars in lost productivity due to congestion in our major cities. This loss will continue to grow as congestion gets worse and more hours are lost to commuting. By 2015 Brisbane will be the biggest loser in productivity due to congestion, with an estimated cost of \$9.3 billion annually which is a loss of \$4600 to each household in South-East Queensland. This figure does not account for the

loss to business and industry that will have operations constrained by the growing congestion problem.

Hours lost to traffic congestion are not only a cost to the household budget and the region's economy, but a cost to the society at large. Every hour spent in traffic is 1 hour less for relaxation or time with loved ones. It is 1 more hour of stress, which when compounded over time develops aggressive and anti-social behaviour that can not only transform into "road rage" but a considerable degradation of mental wellbeing.

Studies have shown that the crisis of obesity in the United States and Australia has been directly linked to the high rate of private vehicle dependency in both countries. We can not afford a further burden on our State's health system, which is already in crisis.

Due to the current technology almost all motor vehicles are dependent on fossil fuels and so release massive amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Smog filled skies reduce the aesthetics of urban landscapes. Unnatural levels of greenhouse gasses are released into our atmosphere, contributing to the threat of global warming. The fuels relied upon to feed congestion will not be around forever and, in the coming decades, will become more and more costly.

The *South-East Queensland Congestion Relief Bill 2008* aims to future proof the communities of South-East Queensland from the real and coming problems associated with motor vehicle dependency. It is not a tax or an additional cost to families and individuals struggling to pay for their car use. It is recognition of the real costs associated with traffic. This Bill will ensure public transport is planned for and provided, giving people an alternative to the car and reward those who choose to leave the car at home. This Bill aims to deliver the reward of free movement along all of South-East Queensland's major roads, ensuring that our communities will continue to prosper into the future. By taking action now the Queensland Government can prevent South-East Queensland from developing into a city like Los Angeles which is marred with the economic, social and environmental scars inflicted by governments who failed to take a serious hard line on congestion.