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THE CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT



*from*

**The Hon. Rob Borbidge, M.L.A.**

**Premier of Queensland**

*Tuesday, 25 November 1997*

*Parliament House, Brisbane*

MR SPEAKER ... I SEEK LEAVE TO MAKE A MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

MR SPEAKER

Yesterday Cabinet endorsed the Brisbane Light Rail Project, an initiative that represents one of the biggest boosts to public transport and essential infrastructure that this State has seen, and which will revitalise the Brisbane CBD, the Valley and West End.

The project involves the construction of a 15.2 kilometre light rail line servicing the University of Queensland, West End, South Brisbane, the CBD, Fortitude Valley, Teneriffe, New Farm and Newstead.

The line will run light rail vehicles from 5 am to 11 pm, with five minute frequency during peak hours on weekdays and 10 minute frequency during off peak and weekends.

It is a \$210 million project that will, during the construction phase, create up to 3,000 jobs both in Brisbane and elsewhere.

Of that \$210 million, some \$70 million will be earmarked for the construction of light rail vehicles. Approximately 30 will be built, of which two thirds will be modern articulated vehicles and one third will be replica Phoenix FM vehicles.

In addition the project has been costed on the basis that a capital grant will be provided to the Tramways Museum to restore original Brisbane trams and run them on the system on a Sunday as a major tourist attraction for the Valley.

It is patently clear that Brisbane needs this system. The ever increasing population of the inner city, with consequent traffic congestion, the unfortunate ongoing problems with air quality and the crying need to improve accessibility in and around the inner city are powerful reasons why light rail is an attractive option.

In giving in principle support for this project the Government was motivated by the following objectives:

1. encouraging urban renewal;
2. revitalising the Valley;
3. encouraging redevelopment;
4. promoting tourism;
5. complementing existing and future public transportation systems;
6. reducing the environmental impacts of traffic in the City;
7. encouraging and increasing overall public transport use;
8. reducing traffic congestion;
9. improving mobility in the inner city and;
10. increasing accessibility to all public transport users, especially the aged and disabled.

Mr Speaker what this Government is proposing is nothing short of a world class integrated public transport system.

It has been designed in conformity with the Integrated Regional Transport Plan which was released in April.

It has been designed so that it will complement and not detract from other forms of public transport - buses, trains and ferries. In fact the planning for this project is predicated on an integrated ticketing system, so that there will be maximum ease of use for commuters and there will be a significant encouragement to use the system.

As the project will be servicing students, the aged and areas of low income, the planning has also taken into account the need for community service obligations. This will not be a boutique system which charges a premium fare and doesn't cater for the vast bulk of public transport users.

This will be a system for the People and designed with their needs and aspirations in mind. For example, the modern articulated trams will be built with Federal disability legislation in mind, so that there will be low rise floors to enable access to all.

The genesis of this project is the Integrated Regional Transport Plan. Over the past eight months or so work on this system has been spearheaded by an Interdepartmental Task Force headed by my Department's Deputy Director General. Mr John Sosso.

The Task Force has had discussions with Federal officials and other interested parties, and has developed a detailed and well researched proposal.

The proposal was investigated by Price Waterhouse who were asked to determine whether the risk profile of the project, based on assumptions provided to them, were likely to be acceptable to private enterprise investors and whether the return characteristics of the project, as modelled, would be likely to attract private sector investment. The firm was also asked whether there were any major types of issues not covered by the preliminary feasibility study, which would be expected to have been considered.

Price Waterhouse concluded that, and I quote: *“The work performed to date is of a reasonable standard for a prefeasibility study, and in many areas, is of a higher standard than would be expected. It reflects considerable research by Queensland Transport. We would not expect significantly more detail to have been included in the prefeasibility study at this stage in the project’s investigation.”*

After ticking the preliminary work the Government has done, Price Waterhouse concluded with these comments about the project’s financial feasibility: *“initial indications are that the project is a promising candidate for a successful bidding process by private sector consortia.”*

Mr Speaker the project is intended to be one financed, owned and operated by the private sector with the Commonwealth, State and Local Government all providing one off capital assistance to get it going.

In this respect it will be somewhat similar to the recently opened Sydney Light Rail System.

Queensland has asked the Commonwealth for \$60 million as part of the Prime Minister's Centenary of Federation Fund. I am confident from the discussions to date that Federal funding will be forthcoming.

The State is also prepared to make its contribution to ensure that this project gets up and going. Furthermore I am gratified that the Lord Mayor has welcomed - even attempted to claim some credit for - this project, for the BCC will also be asked to get behind it financially and logistically.

Mr Speaker bringing back trams to Brisbane is not returning to the past. Rather it reflects a wider public transport trend throughout the world. Since 1980 approximately 80 light rail or tram systems have either been developed or extended, with examples being Sydney, Manchester, Denver, Dallas, Christchurch, Strasbourg and Toronto.

The planning for this system has focussed on ensuring minimal traffic disruption, and for that reason the tram tracks will not necessarily always be in the centre of the road.

Moreover tram stops will be staggered so traffic flow is not unduly disrupted.

Every effort will be made to minimise any effect on loading zones and taxi ranks.

Finally the proposal does not entail the resumption of any residential or commercial properties.

The bridge across the Brisbane River at West End will be limited to tram, bike and pedestrian traffic only. The object of this green bridge, as with the project generally, is to improve amenity and the worth of people's lifestyle, not to impair it.

Mr Speaker much more work needs to be done, and extensive consultations will have to be carried out.

However, we are confident that this project can be completed for our nation's centenary year. It will be a great boost to Brisbane once this system is operational in 2001.

In conclusion, then, this project represents this Government's vision for Brisbane. It is a confident vision that is based on the view that the inner city will continue to grow, develop and mature.

I am sure that this vision will be endorsed and shared by other key stakeholders, including the BCC, the Federal Government and business community. Most importantly, however, I am very confident that the general public want this project and will give it continuing support.

We all should be proud of what Brisbane is and how it is developing.

Getting rid of the trams in 1969 was, in retrospect, a backward move. Their revival in 2001 should, however, result in immediate and ongoing benefits of both a financial and social kind and will put the stamp on Brisbane being the world class city that we all recognise it to be.

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