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TRANSPORT

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It's a sad fact that Brisbane has some of the worst public transport in Australia. You all know what an ordeal it can be getting to work, or home again - or anywhere else for that matter - on overcrowded or dilapidated trains, often running late into the bargain. Run-down old-fashioned transport services are not just uncomfortable and slow; they are uneconomic as well. More and more people are forced to take their cars to work, and the number of passengers declines. Transport losses increase, fares keep going up, and still more people are discouraged from using the services. It's a vicious circle. It's a problem faced in most of the world's great cities, but with this difference: other cities are doing something about it. Brisbane is lagging behind.

When Labor came in we gave a high priority to upgrading urban transport services in our great cities. Of course we can't do this without the cooperation of the States. We have offered the Queensland Government almost \$20 million over the next three and a half years to electrify your suburban railways and upgrade Brisbane transport services generally. No national Government has ever made free grants for urban transport before. The Bjelke-Petersen Government dithered and delayed for a long time before accepting our proposals. As far back as 1957 the Country Party in this State scrapped the previous Labor Government's plans for suburban electrification. They did nothing for 18 years until my Government's offer was made last year. Some of you may remember the modern urban passenger carriage we put on display in City Square a few months ago. That's a sample of the comfortable, streamlined trains we hope to see eventually on all Brisbane's suburban railways.

And it's not just in city transport that a Labor Government is getting on with the job. Previous Liberal Governments in Canberra shirked one of the great development projects needed in Queensland - a national highway linking her coastal cities with Brisbane and the southern States. Labor has given the go-ahead for a high-grade all-weather highway to link Cairns with Brisbane - and eventually with Sydney and Melbourne. Despite opposition obstruction we have passed the necessary legislation to provide \$1,126 million for our national roads program over the next three years. We are the first National Government in Australia to undertake this essential program. No State Government has had the resources to do it alone. No previous Federal Government cared enough to do it - even though they had the necessary constitutional powers. We are using those powers. We are getting on with the job.

We are doing a lot for other roads as well. For example, to improve Mt. Isa's links with the rest of Queensland the Australian Government will help build the Landsborough Highway from Mt. Isa to Brisbane as a full-scale all-weather road. This will be part of the national highways program, so Mt. Isa will be linked in due course by first-class roads to Melbourne and Sydney.

On top of that we will spend \$24 million in Queensland on northern beef roads over the next three years. All of this means a first-class rural and inter-city road network for Queensland. It's worth recalling that the Bjelke-Petersen Government in 1972 promised that all Queensland State highways would be full bitumen roads by 1975. Of course that won't happen. But with the help of the Australian Labor Government Queensland's roads will be among the best in Australia.

There are two other matters I want to mention in the transport area. One is the new international terminal we are building at Brisbane airport at cost of more than \$4 million. We expect it to be finished by the end of this year. The other concerns the Australian National Line. We want to see Queensland's coastal cities served by A.N.L. ships. There is no reason in the world why Australia's own shipping line shouldn't ply between the ports on Queensland's coast. But Mr. Bjelke-Petersen won't let them. He insists that A.N.L. ships should only sail between a Queensland port and a port in another State. And he's alone among the Premiers in preventing the A.N.L. providing services between ports in Queensland. As a result we have the absurd situation of foreign ships being chartered to carry bauxite from Weipa to Gladstone - a job that Australian ships could do just as well.

I'm afraid Mr. Bjelke-Petersen's obstinacy hasn't helped transport services in Queensland. I spoke earlier of railways. When we came to office the Labor Government offered to take over financial responsibility for all State railways. These railways are a crippling burden on State budgets and financing them puts a heavy strain on a State's resources. There is no constitutional barrier to the Australian Government taking over these services - in fact the Constitution specifically envisages such a possibility in Section 51. We have just reached agreement with South Australia which will relieve that State of the financial burden of its non-metropolitan rail services. Mr. Bjelke-Petersen has refused to discuss our offer. So whenever you hear Mr. Bjelke-Petersen crying poor mouth, or complaining of a lack of help from the Australian Government, remember the opportunity he has turned down to boost his State revenues and improve transport systems throughout Queensland. My Government is doing everything in its power to help. It will be a great pity if Queensland people have to put up any longer with bad roads or run-down buses and trains because their Premier won't cooperate with a National Labor Government.