

Second Reading

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON (Minister for Transport) [5.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Transport Administration Amendment Bill 2010. One of the privileges of being a member of Parliament and a Minister of the Crown is the opportunity it provides to make a real difference for the communities we represent. This is one of those opportunities and I am delighted to be able to present this bill so early in my time in my new portfolio. The community expects the Government to deliver a transport system that is integrated and coordinated; has a high standard of reliability and cleanliness; has coordinated timetables that effectively link trains, buses and ferries with each other; has easy to navigate transport interchanges; manages incidents when they occur in an efficient and coordinated way; has the appropriate resources in place to deliver improved services; continues to expand to cater for the future in a timely and coordinated way; has a single person in charge who is accountable for improved services, rather than multiple transport providers doing their own thing; focuses on reducing congestion through both immediate network improvements and integrated long-term strategies and infrastructure investment; and, most importantly, is safe.

Last year the Public Sector Employment and Management (Departmental Amalgamations) Order 2009 established a central transport agency. The bill builds on this by strengthening the role of Transport NSW, with the Director General having an overarching accountability for the delivery of all transport infrastructure, transport policy, planning and service coordination, timetabling and incident management and the power to administer a single transport budget across rail, bus, ferry, cycle, roads and freight. This bill is a key element of the Government's commitment to improving service delivery by consolidating 160 government agencies and offices into 13 clusters, as announced in the 2009-10 budget. The changes to transport as part of the amalgamation reform program are substantial. The bill represents a very significant improvement for the people of New South Wales. I am enormously pleased to be a part of it.

At the core of this bill are four key objectives that go beyond simply presenting a valid reason as to why the legislation is being introduced. These objectives form the platform of the ongoing commitment of the Government to improve the delivery of transport services and infrastructure to the people of New South Wales. These four objectives are: to create an integrated approach to the delivery of transport services and infrastructure that results in a greater effort by public sector agencies as to what is best for the community rather than simply complying with their own set of priorities; to better coordinate the delivery of transport services to ensure that budgets and resources are allocated to community priorities and can be shifted effectively to meet changing demands; to enhance the accountability of public sector agencies to deliver the transport services and infrastructure the community deserves through prioritisation of strategic targets and commitments of the portfolio and placing a greater focus on the customer and a more results-driven culture; and to ensure that safety for our passengers, our employees and our community as a whole remains the top priority by enabling the Independent Safety Regulator to assist the director general in relation to the regulation of bus safety and by maintaining a strong emphasis on rail safety.

In 2009-10 the New South Wales Government is investing a record \$7.1 billion in operating and expanding the extensive New South Wales public transport system and \$4.4 billion in maintaining and upgrading the New South Wales road network. The community is not only interested in how much money is allocated to our transport agencies. The New South Wales community is understandably concerned that these resources are targeted where they are needed most, whether that is new rail lines, as outlined in the recently launched Metropolitan Transport Plan, improvements to local roads and highways, better connecting bus, ferry and train services, or somewhere safe to park their car so that they can make a connection to get where they want to go. I will outline to the House how this bill and the establishment of Transport NSW will produce the improvements that the community expects.

There will be one department, Transport NSW, with overall responsibility to drive better services and the delivery of the \$50.2 billion Metropolitan Transport Plan. This department will be led by a single director general who will have responsibility for the delivery of all transport infrastructure, transport policy, planning and service coordination, timetabling, incident management and the power to administer a single transport budget across all transport modes. The director general's responsibility, very importantly, will be strengthened by having the power to direct those public sector transport agencies in the future. Our transport operators—RailCorp, the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries and the Roads and Traffic Authority—will report to the director general of the department and will work together to deliver better and more integrated transport solutions for the people of New South Wales. These operators will be responsible for the delivery of services as part of a large coordinated transport system.

There will be a single transport and roads budget. The Minister for Transport and the director general will be able to manage the budget and reprioritise funds within the overall allocation. In addition to a Minister for Transport

with budgetary oversight for the department, the Premier also has appointed the Hon. David Borger as Minister for Roads to drive effective delivery in this critical area. Finally, bringing transport operators together will result in streamlined governance arrangements and the abolition of the existing boards in the portfolio. With millions of journeys taking place on public transport and our road network every day, it is vital that agencies work together to develop solutions that go beyond their respective modes and focus on making the journey easier for all the community.

The bill provides the basis for a Coordination Division of Transport NSW. This integrated team will be made up of staff from across the various agencies. Its goal will be to better coordinate the daily transport task for commuters, improve the coordination at existing interchange facilities, manage incidents and enhance the experience for people as they move around the city during major events. Not only does the new structure recognise the need to coordinate existing transport modes, it also recognises that light rail and cycleways are legitimate transport options for the community. When considering the delivery of roads projects, all transport options should be assessed to ensure that the right resourcing decision is made. I am proud of the fact that recent customer satisfaction surveys carried out by the Independent Transport Safety Regulator have demonstrated that passengers are seeing real improvements across the public transport network. This is something I am determined to continue to work on.

While improving the everyday transport experience for the community is obviously a priority, so too is ensuring the effective integration and development of strategic plans for future services and infrastructure. Under this bill, Transport NSW will lead the way in the development and implementation of strategic plans, including the Metropolitan Transport Plan, to ensure that the right infrastructure and services are provided as New South Wales and Sydney continue to grow. This bill ensures that the Director General of Transport NSW, reporting to me as the Minister for Transport, has accountability for the delivery of effective transport planning across the modes that aligns with land use strategies established for metropolitan and regional areas. Already this integrated approach has been taken in the Government's Metropolitan Transport Plan and the more recently announced Sydney Metropolitan Strategy review to ensure alignment of land use development and infrastructure priorities.

A well coordinated approach to transport planning and management relies on the knowledge, skill and commitment that public servants in the Transport portfolio show every day. That is why it is essential that we have the right expert staff in the right place across Transport. The bill allows greater flexibility to move staff to areas where they are needed the most, but it does not impact upon the working conditions of staff. The employment arrangements of front-line staff remain unaffected. This means bus drivers will still drive buses and train drivers will still drive trains.

Earlier I spoke about this bill enhancing the accountability of transport agencies to deliver the services and infrastructure the community expects, and I will explain that now in more detail. The community has an expectation, and rightly so, that effective delivery of transport services and infrastructure is the responsibility of government. Whilst it obviously involves working with the private sector to meet these demands, ultimately the buck stops with the government of the day. That is why the bill supports the implementation of robust service delivery contracts between Transport NSW and the public sector providers, such as RailCorp, Sydney Ferries and Sydney Buses, that are based on tangible and agreed-upon performance standards and will be monitored centrally to ensure that taxpayers' money is being used to deliver a quality service. This approach builds on the Government's performance contract arrangements with the private bus industry.

Clause 3C of the draft bill makes it a specific function of the director general to enter into these service delivery contracts with the public sector transport agencies. Agencies will also be expected to ensure that the services they provide are in alignment with the key strategic goals and priorities of the broader portfolio, as outlined through the Metropolitan Transport Plan and the New South Wales State Plan. The community expects its public servants and elected officials to be accountable for the services and infrastructure that people pay for through their taxes. That is why this bill will see the removal of statutory boards that exist within the portfolio, which will be replaced with a single statutory Transport Advisory Council.

The reason for this decision is a simple one: greater accountability on the part of the director general and the chief executives and an enhanced ability for them to work directly with the Government to get on with the job of delivering the transport services the community expects. I make no apologies for this bill having a sharp focus on accountability. This Government will not abdicate accountability to a board that has not been elected by the broader community simply as a way to avoid making the tough decisions that will enhance the way that transport services and infrastructure are delivered. Using boards to obfuscate accountability is irresponsible and goes against the very reason we are elected to Parliament, which is to make the best decisions in the interest of the communities we represent.

Equally, I will hold to account private sector contractors and public servants who do not meet their obligations to deliver for the community. Now is the time for strong leadership from government to deal with the increasing demands on our transport system. The model of governance outlined in this bill provides for input and advice to be sought from industry experts and key stakeholders with specialist knowledge through the establishment of a single Transport Advisory Council. This council, which will include a dedicated community representative, will

provide advice to the Government on the progress being made to deliver against key strategic commitments and targets, including those in the Metropolitan Transport Plan and the New South Wales State Plan. The council will also be able to engage in specific pieces of work aimed at improving efficiencies and service delivery across the portfolio as a whole.

Safety is something that we can never take for granted in the transport sector. Our agencies are committed to making our public transport and road network as safe as possible. I will ensure that that commitment is maintained. The reliability functions of the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator are to be transferred to Transport NSW to align service delivery procurement and reliability functions. The Government believes it is important that there continues to be an independent safety regulator. Under this bill the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator will retain its safety regulation functions under the Transport Administration Act.

In addition, the bill also makes it clear that should a direction be given to RailCorp by the director general or the Minister that RailCorp believes may have an impact on safety, then the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator will be asked to provide advice and make a recommendation as to whether that is the case. The bill also contemplates a future expansion of the role of the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator by amending the Passenger Transport Act to allow the director general to enter into an arrangement with the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator to assist him or her to exercise his or her functions under that Act in relation to the regulation of bus safety.

Reform is rarely easy but it is necessary in order to drive a culture of continuous improvement in the delivery of services to the community. The community wants it, the transport experts recommend it, and it is already done overseas. In short, this reform is essential. Getting people to and from where they want to go will always have challenges. However, the bill is a key part of the reform process currently underway and will accelerate the improvements in transport services and infrastructure delivery through better integration and coordination, greater accountability, more effective strategic planning and a greater focus on meeting key performance measures as expected by the community. I commend the bill to the House.