



Speech by

Tony ELLIOTT

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
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Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (3.32 p.m.): In the limited time that I have available to me, and in a scatter-gun approach, I would like to raise a number of issues affecting my electorate. Unfortunately, I do not have time to go consistently through all the issues.

The first issue that I raise relates to the Transport portfolio and the road system within my electorate. There are some considerable problems with the roads in my electorate, and these problems flow through into the adjoining electorate of my colleague the member for Warrego. The flood damage that has been done in that area is of great concern to me. Of course, that flood damage has also affected the Warwick electorate, and a large amount of money is needed to overcome it.

I am sure that the Government is aware of these problems. The Minister for Emergency Services has indicated to me that, with the declaration of a state of emergency in that area, funds will be going to those shires, particularly the Waggamba Shire, which has probably suffered more damage than any other shire in that area. Some of those roads have been under water for extended periods eight times since April. As a result, those roads have been devastated. The edges of culverts are falling apart and dropping away. In some instances, people have physically become bogged in a bitumen road—and that is pretty hard to do! This is a huge problem.

The three areas in my electorate that I would like to mention in particular are the Brigalow Creek, Wondalli Creek and Murri Murri Creek crossings. The Murri Murri Creek crossing is located on the Leichhardt Highway just before the turn-off towards Millmerran and the Gore Highway. Some good work was done, in conjunction with the Waggamba Shire, by putting a very thick layer of asphalt, rather than bitumen, on the surface of that road. I believe that surface has stood up well to the floods, and that has been a great help.

I understand that for some time this issue has been in the planning stages with the Federal road authority. At a function in Toowoomba the other day, I spoke to a gentleman who worked for the previous Minister and who now works for the present Minister. He indicated that the authority was doing fairly well with the plans for the entire area along that Murri Murri Creek crossing. It is quite an extensive wet area that needs a good deal of money spent on it to make it not only flood proof but safe for those who branch off the Leichhardt Highway onto the Gore Highway.

I urge the Minister to see what he can do in respect of this problem. What happens is that people get as far as Goondiwindi during a flood. They then get stuck there and are unable to continue along that road. The other escape route, of course, is along the Cunningham Highway, in the electorate of my colleague the member for Warwick, then through Cunningham's Gap to Brisbane or wherever. The problem there is that Brigalow Creek blocks them. It is not an extensive area like the Murri Murri Creek crossing, and it would cost nowhere near as much to remedy the problems there. The work to be done on that section has been gazetted. A promise has been made. So I hope that this Government will honour that promise and funds will be spent on that section. Members have seen the spectacle of some 40-odd trucks that were held up in Goondiwindi, unable to go up the Gore Highway or the Cunningham Highway. Only a small amount of money would need to be spent on Brigalow Creek, and even less would need to be spent on Wondalli Creek, somewhere near Desert Oak, which has taken over the sheep and goat abattoir. If the problems with the Wondalli Creek crossing were fixed, traffic would be able to get to Warwick, Brisbane and so on. I urge the Government to address those problems.

While I am talking about the Goondiwindi area, I wish to mention the Goondiwindi State School. I have spoken with the Minister for Education, the Honourable Dean Wells, about this issue. I know that he is a very genuine person, and I trust that he will consider the problems of the Goondiwindi State School, which has some very old-fashioned buildings into which the western sun shines from midday onwards. The heat in those buildings is intolerable. There is a heat exertion factor—or whatever it is called—which stipulates what kids can put up with, and on many occasions, because of the heat, kids have had to be moved out of those buildings. Last summer, the temperature inside those buildings rose to 46 degrees.

The medical fraternity in Goondiwindi have written to me, to the local P & C and, I think, to the Minister, indicating that they believe that those children face very serious health risks by having to suffer in extreme temperatures in those old buildings. They do not need expensive refrigerated airconditioning, as do many schools in the northern parts of the State. The members of that community have raised some \$43,000 of their own money. All they are looking for is two dollars for every one dollar that they have raised. If they could get a combined funding total of about \$130,000, evaporative cooling could be installed in that building, and that would overcome those problems.

The Goondiwindi State School is the only Government building in Goondiwindi that has not been airconditioned. It is the only school in the area that is not airconditioned. One school just over the border at Boggabilla, which also caters for students from Toomelah, has airconditioning. As honourable members can imagine, this is a divisive issue which I do not believe should be allowed to continue. These are the sorts of issues that create problems in our communities, and I believe that it is very important that we overcome them. I know that the Minister is an empathetic, sympathetic person, and I believe that he will look at this issue sympathetically.

Middle Ridge State School is on a path from a large residential area to the University of Southern Queensland. The school is in the middle of an area that contains other schools and retirement villages, which have people coming to visit the retirees. Unfortunately, some people do not obey the traffic laws. That area is eternally foggy. For a large period of the year, both summer and winter, there are fogs. Parents set down and pick up children at the school. There is not sufficient room for a safe pick-up and set down area. Children have already been injured. Fortunately, there has not been a fatality. We need to buy additional land to create a proper set down area and put a complete stop to people dropping off their children in dangerous places. Unfortunately, some parents will not drop their children where they should drop them; they tend to drop them right outside the school. Those children run the gauntlet of other traffic and cars backing out of parking bays. The situation is a nightmare. It is a very serious safety problem. My colleagues the members for Toowoomba North and Toowoomba South have looked at that problem with me and they support what I am asking for. We ask the Government to once again consider that problem. My understanding is that it was to be addressed. I hope that that will continue to be the case. I will take that up with the Minister.

The Pittsworth State High School has been trying to reorganise its buildings. A home economics block has been promised for three or more years. All the planning has been done, the building is up and everything is ready to go. All that is needed is someone to fire the gun and provide the funds to do it. It is long overdue. As such, I urge the Government to consider it. In common with many other areas, Pittsworth has been through a time of tremendous drought and stress. Many of the children at that school are already stressed because of their parents' financial problems. I do not understand why we should heap other dramas on them. They are not asking for anything more than those things that most of us take for granted. People in the built-up areas in the south-east corner have the sorts of facilities that Pittsworth State High School is asking for. I ask that that be addressed promptly, because it is very important.

Regrettably, my time has almost expired. I am pleased to see that, in the main, the incoming Government is sticking largely to the Budget that we brought down. I have noted some changes. I have produced a press release in relation to some housing issues. It appears that the Government is neglecting totally the Darling Downs and the western areas in that regard. The money appears to be going into the central area. I think that is a pity. Otherwise, the Government is to be commended for maintaining a large Capital Works Program. Once they are built, those facilities cannot be taken away. No matter which Government is in power, those projects will be a great asset to our community. They will create jobs. The Government should be commended for continuing in that direction.
