



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 21 July 1999

### MAROOCHY RIVER BRIDGE

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydores—NPA) (11.10 p.m.): The Maroochy River bridge at Bli Bli on the David Low Way is a deathtrap that must be upgraded. In May 1998, 20-year-old Nico Sprengel was killed in a tragic accident on this bridge when he lost control of his motorcycle. I understand that some of the contributory factors towards Mr Sprengel's accident were rain, darkness on the bridge due to no suitable lighting and the railroad tracks that run over the bridge.

As I speak in the House tonight I am still awaiting a copy of the Coroner's report to confirm these findings. However, in a letter addressed to me, Nicola Pringle, who attended the hearing a couple of months ago, stated—

"The Coroner suggested that adequate lighting and signage be a temporary measure until such time as a suitable strategy into the repairs for the safety of the bridge be resolved."

Ms Pringle goes on to say—

"It has clearly been stated by the Main Roads Department that there is no easy quick fix way and that it will be quite expensive. I respect this, however, I ask what is the cost of money when it comes down to lives. Nico was not the only one who has had a serious accident on the bridge, unfortunately however, Nico was the only one to die."

There is no doubt that the bridge must be upgraded and that it is notoriously narrow and difficult to negotiate. There have been other accidents on this bridge and many people say that they just do not feel safe crossing it. I have received a petition from some 2,618 concerned people, mainly Sunshine Coast residents who live in the vicinity of the bridge who are calling for "something to be done about this bridge for the safety of our local residents and future generations". I table that petition and I call on the Government to look urgently at all options to place this bridge on a program for replacement.

I believe that the only satisfactory way to fix the problem is for the bridge to be replaced. Few places in the State would carry the sort of daily traffic that this bridge does with a cane track cutting on a sharp angle across the road within the narrow confines of the bridge. The bridge was originally funded two thirds by the Maroochy Shire Council and one third by the cane industry. An agreement was signed on 24 August 1955 between Moreton Central Sugar Mill Company Limited and the council. I understand that the council funds were raised by a levy on ratepayers in that vicinity and that the total budgeted cost at that time was about £60,000.

When the bridge was built, I can well imagine that the cane industry was a major user of it. Through its substantial contribution towards building costs, over the years the cane industry has helped to open up this section of the Sunshine Coast to many other people who were not members of the cane industry. We have all benefited. It is hard for those of us who were born after the 1950s to appreciate how it was in the days before the bridge was constructed when people relied on river traffic to cross the river.

However, these days the level of traffic means that a cane tram track and other vehicular usage are not compatible. It is time that the Government paid to construct a new bridge that separates users and reduces the hazards faced by motorists. I endorse the concerns expressed by Ms Pringle. I also endorse the concerns expressed in the petition that I have tabled. I call on the Government to look at ways of placing the bridge on a replacement program, because temporary measures such as improving

signage are really only cosmetic. It is no longer practical to have cane trams competing with the traffic that is being carried by the bridge. The bridge has passed its use-by date in its own right. It is an extremely busy road. Certainly I believe that the bridge needs urgent attention for the safety of all users.

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