



Speech by

**Mrs J. SHELDON**

**MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA**

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Hansard 13 April 1999

### **CALOUNDRA RAIL CORRIDOR**

**Mrs SHELDON** (Caloundra—LP) (11.50 a.m.): I bring forward as a matter of public importance the need to review the Government's decision on the Caloundra rail corridor—the need to examine whether the Government's choice of a rail corridor for Caloundra has been made correctly and the need to provide compensation to those indirectly affected. It is important that we examine the issues prior to any land resumption taking place, and as expeditiously as possible, in order to avoid prolonging uncertainty in the community.

Let me make it clear that no-one is against the concept of a Sunshine Coast railway; the only argument is which route it should follow. The more than 1,000 people who have signed petitions—backed by community groups, business organisations, developers, the Opposition and the Caloundra City Council—want the rail corridor to follow the Corbould Park option. This is the option my constituents overwhelmingly want and is the one which has the least impact on the environment and the least disruption to people's lives. Seventy-three per cent of the submissions made to CAMCOS favoured Corbould Park; only 27% favoured the Aroona option.

Corbould Park is a visionary transport system which we want and need to meet Caloundra's medium and long-term transport needs. Instead, the Minister for Transport chose an option which almost everyone on the Sunshine Coast believes that he held from the start. The Minister chose his preferred option after doing little more than paying lip-service to the process of public consultation. He threw the opinions of the vast majority of people straight in the bin and he sneaked through his announcement to the Caloundra media in the early hours of Thursday just before the Easter holidays, knowing that the print media would not be publishing on Good Friday.

This whole exercise has been a sham. There has been no transparency in the decision-making process and no accountability. The wishes and the aspirations of Sunshine Coast residents have been ignored. It is Tollbusters and the koala corridor all over again. Where is the decent Government for all and the promise of no steamrolling of decisions against the very people who are affected? Let the Minister try to deny any involvement in an attempt to stack a CAAC public meeting on 22 March to the small group of people who supported his views, and his exuberant thanks after the meeting to those who had done his bidding.

There have been so many deficiencies in the process that the final decision cannot possibly stand. The CAMCOS study itself has been largely discredited by community and expert groups. Some of that criticism is in the submissions made to CAMCOS which CAMCOS refuses to make public. The CAMCOS study is equally deficient in its omissions and in areas where detailed work and studies have not been carried out.

Residents only became fully aware of the proposals one month before the deadline for submissions after I had asked CAMCOS if it would letterbox-drop people who could be affected in the Aroona corridor. This was eventually extended by three weeks after we asked the Minister to allow the public at least some time to put in their submissions. Why was there such a race to make a decision once the community became fully aware of the proposals? In CAMCOS's own words, this corridor will not translate into the reality of a rail line until about 2010 or 2011.

That mad rush to make the decision on April Fool's Day is illustrated by the following sequence of events: on 18 March Caloundra City Council says CAMCOS has advised that vital information needed to reach a decision would not be available until 28 March; on 21 March public submissions

closed; 22 March was the only day where the Minister would agree to meet the people of Caloundra to discuss the issue and at the meeting the Minister said, "No more public submissions ... the deadline has passed"; and on 28 March, presumably, that vital information which CAMCOS told council was crucial to a decision was completed.

Three days later, a 118-page report, with attachments, was being distributed at a cost of \$40 per copy, together with executive summaries, press ads and letterbox-drop leaflets which all supported the Minister's decision. The report was obviously written to accommodate the Minister's views. References in the report to the Boddee land as having potential for residential A use date the writing of the report back to at least 18 March, as the Department of State Development purchased this land for industrial purposes on that date.

It is one of the worst reports I have read. It contains factual and grammatical mistakes and lacks logical cohesion. It makes some extraordinary observations that cannot go unchallenged. The report starts off with 13 criteria and then deletes most of these back to its original Stage 2 criteria of transport, environment and economics. Under the transport criteria, the report excludes all of the potential development to the south of Caloundra Road in the Caloundra Downs region. The report erroneously states that any corridor will equally service this area of potential development.

In fact, the Corbould Park corridor best services any future urban development to the south of Caloundra Road and Caloundra Downs. The Golden Beach/Aroona option will not service this area. There is no provision in the study for a rail station or any linkages to the Caloundra Downs area. The southern section of Caloundra Downs, through which the Golden Beach/Aroona corridor passes, is the most environmentally sensitive portion of the Caloundra Downs holding and is unlikely to be developed for urban purposes.

CAMCOS should have modelled the demand forecasts on the basis that at least part of the Caloundra Downs area would be developed. Had it done so, the passenger projections would have increased substantially. Under the environmental criteria, CAMCOS unequivocally states—

"When assessing the totality of environmental effects considered in this report, the preferred option on purely environmental and social impact grounds is the Corbould Park option."

CAMCOS acknowledges that there will be a potentially higher impact from noise pollution in Aroona due to the close proximity of houses to the corridor.

The rail link through Aroona will have to be elevated above natural ground level, further increasing the effects of noise pollution on adjacent properties. Should this level exceed any legal noise limits, CAMCOS admits that the corridor would have to be scrapped.

When dealing with visual pollution problems, the CAMCOS report shoots itself in the foot again when it states that the Aroona option has a greater capacity to absorb changes to the natural and urban landscape. I find it impossible to accept this statement when the Aroona corridor travels through and close to established residential areas. How does CAMCOS propose to remove this blot on the landscape?

Under the economic criteria, financial evaluation is the same for all corridors according to CAMCOS. However, the economic evaluation favours the Aroona option, but only because the demand forecasts exclude the areas south of Caloundra Road and Caloundra Downs Two. Under the transport criteria, all corridors meet the Integrated Regional Transport Plan objectives.

According to CAMCOS, the Aroona corridor has the highest passenger demand forecasts. But, as I said before, the forecasts exclude any population growth that will be generated by urban development south of Caloundra Road. With the inclusion of population data south of Caloundra Road, the conclusions reached by CAMCOS in relation to pollution and congestion could be called into question.

It is difficult to understand how the Aroona corridor "improves accessibility and social justice for all". How is there improved accessibility for the Aroona corridor if the bulk of the Caloundra population does not require rail access for its own local shopping and service facilities? I would be interested in knowing CAMCOS's definition of "social justice for all".

The Corbould Park option provides an opportunity for an integrated transport system that will be progressively supported by the development it serves and would naturally link to the designated multi-modal corridor to the north of Caloundra Road at Corbould Park. The Aroona corridor does not have the ability to integrate land use and transport as it is severely constrained by existing urban development.

The vast majority of people in my electorate do not believe that the process of selection of the public corridor has been carried out impartially; nor do many people believe that their public submissions have been fully taken into account. Corbould Park is clearly the best rail corridor option for Caloundra. It will save the State Government millions of dollars. It will have minimal impact on the

environment. It will not impinge on endangered rainforest at Aroona which the Caloundra City Council, on advice from the Department of Environment, is trying to save.

Last week, the Caloundra City Council rejected an application for the development of a badly needed 103-unit retirement village in Aroona on environmental and other grounds. The application was rejected as it was in conflict with the implementation criteria for significant vegetation within the strategic plan. It was also rejected on drainage grounds and on the Department of Environment's own submission that rainforest priority 1 and 2 and acid sulfate soils were in the area. This is the same area which is going to be dug up for the rail corridor.

When is significant vegetation not significant vegetation? It is when a rail corridor is involved, it appears. The Aroona rail corridor will almost certainly affect plans for an adjacent 250-unit retirement village, as well as causing severe problems to an existing village. The Corbould Park option—particularly if it is routed south of the racecourse—will not affect houses. It does not force people to trade the peace and tranquillity they enjoy for a railroad 50 metres from their back fences. It does not devalue their properties by up to 30%.

If the Minister will not change his mind, based on the commonsense matters which I have put forward and the fact that the report is erroneous and that there was not sufficient time for the Minister to make a reasonable decision, it is only fair that people whose properties are directly or indirectly affected are adequately compensated. There is precedent for this in the koala corridor and on the Sunshine Coast.

Time expired.

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