



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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APPROPRIATION BILL [No. 2]; APPROPRIATION [PARLIAMENT] BILL [No. 2]

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—CCAQ) (12.39 p.m.): I rise to take part in this debate on the Appropriation Bill and, in doing so, I, too, want to refer to some of the performances of the Beattie Labor Government and its commitment to jobs, especially in high unemployment areas. Of course, my electorate of Caboolture is certainly one of those.

I know that, as the previous speaker said, the push is on for Queensland to become the Smart State. There is a big push to keep our children in school and to actually push them on to achieve in higher education. I take on board that there is this real push to make Queensland the Smart State. I hope that it is not just a ploy to hide the real unemployment statistics but a genuine push to spur on our children to indeed achieve in the higher education area, especially at university and TAFE. But then again, we always wonder.

This cannot be done without the commitment—and real commitment—from this Government to support higher education and the concept to its fullest. There is a proposal—and I want to highlight this—in my electorate of Caboolture for a university campus. That proposal is for a partnership between TAFE, the QUT and local and Federal governments. That needs highlighting constantly. It certainly needs support from every level of Government to ensure that this project gets the success that it deserves. This project needs real support, real initiatives from this Government and perhaps a little bit of incentive and money to push it on.

I want to highlight that students from the Caboolture Shire either have to travel to Brisbane or to the Sunshine Coast to receive their tertiary education. I do not have to explain to this Government the dire circumstances of the Caboolture electorate in terms of unemployment and job security. Caboolture always seems to end up being the poorer cousin of most other places. Certainly there is that umbrella aspect when we consider some of the things that have been given. However, this time Caboolture needs to be able to cut down on those transport costs that are a burden on most of the families of that electorate. Those transport costs are inextricably tied to the ability of students to gain those tertiary qualifications.

I certainly do not need those financial burdens explained to me, as my daughter is in the last days of her double arts degree at the University of Queensland where she will also graduate with a Bachelor of Education. This has been a hard four-year slog for her, and it has certainly been a real drain on the purse strings of the Feldman family just to get her to and from the university. A lot of the lecture times do not correlate with public transport to and from Caboolture, especially trying to meet buses if my daughter goes by train. Also, the current cost of petrol has added to the financial burden not just of my family, but most other people whose children are travelling to and from Brisbane or to and from the Sunshine Coast to enable their children to gain a tertiary qualification.

My daughter has also had to tie herself down with part-time employment. It is the only way she is going to be able to save some money to put behind her as she approaches being in full-time employment. This ties her to Caboolture, so she is not able to live in Brisbane or take some other job down here, and she sorely needs the income from that part-time job to get her through.

Our children in Caboolture need that part-time work to assist with family budgets. However, it restricts the time available to our children to actually educate themselves. Most of them opt for a longer period of education rather than trying to get it all done in the short term. They actually stretch their

degree out over a longer period and try to work their way through it. The families in the Caboolture electorate—as is the case in your electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker—are not very well off. The children need to try to better themselves, and their parents support them in doing that. Throughout their time at university, of course, they are also building up a HECS debt. That will downgrade their eventual pay packet as the tax man takes his extra cut—that is, if they do in fact get the job that they dreamt of for the four years or so that they toiled hard at university.

That brings me to another small matter that is connected with appropriation, and that is the money that has been allocated to the northern bypass of Caboolture. The resumption process has begun. It is good to see that this project has finally been given approval and the money has been allocated. However, the people of Caboolture and Wamuran are still looking to see when this work will actually commence. The Minister for Transport, the Honourable Steve Bredhauer, made a promise earlier this year in regard to the Moodlu Bridge. It is a very dangerous little bridge. It actually has a curved entrance and exit which makes passing, especially passing of heavy vehicles, very dangerous. Heavy transport travelling between Caboolture, Woodford and Kilcoy out to the Brisbane Valley and then on to areas such as Kingaroy uses that particular route. Buses also have to travel along that route. Several vehicles have collided on the Moodlu Bridge. It is a very common occurrence for trucks and buses to lose their mirrors as they pass each other on that very dangerous little bridge, which goes over the old Wamuran railway spur.

The promise made by the Minister for Transport was that this bridge would be gone by Christmas, but I do not think that will occur. I do not think the residents and the children of Caboolture and Wamuran will get that Christmas present, and I think they will be disappointed when Santa does not deliver it. I hope that there are not more serious incidents on that bridge which result in devastation over the Christmas period.

That leads me to a couple of negative comments that I must make in regard to what is happening in Caboolture at the moment. I note that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition touched on the issue of bankruptcy, and this seems to be a real possibility for the people I am about to speak of. I want to tell the House about the plight of a Caboolture small business operator. He is an auto-electrician, a car air-conditioner repairer and fitter. He lives with his wife and four children. These two people, who are the real salt of the earth dad and mum, kicked off their small business in Caboolture some 16 years ago.

I am talking of Steve and Annette Ross. Steve served this country with distinction in the Royal Australian Navy, and after six years he took his option to retire. With his wife Annette and their children, he returned to his home town of Caboolture and they set up this small business. They took advantage of the home loan available to ex-servicemen to purchase a modest dwelling on Pumicestone Road at Caboolture, which was a rural and residential area at that time.

Like most people, Steve sought to better himself, and a bank loan later they commenced the operation of their small business called Cab-Air. Steve worked from home with his truck. He put in long hours; he worked his tail off to make his business viable, and it certainly was viable. Steve has always worked hard and supported the community through various clubs and charities. He assisted the Caboolture Cricket Club, the Caboolture Soccer Club and the Grant Road Sports Centre where his children engaged in their love of recreational activity. Steve and Annette also supported the naval cadets at Bribie Island. He is an instructor and his wife, Annette, is a member of the committee.

Steve's hard work enabled his business to expand and he moved into small premises off Morayfield Road. He then began to employ and train job seekers from the Caboolture and Morayfield areas. At one time Steve employed five people, but he currently employs three in his small workshop at Morayfield Road. He still maintains his on-road service to his customers from his vehicles. As I have said, Steve always gave back to the community that he did not want to leave. He built extensions onto his home, which he turned into a five-bedroom, two-bathroom highset with a large double lockup garage in the backyard. Security was also installed in the garage, because he houses all of his work equipment in his truck. The lifeblood of his business is in that shed. As he is an auto-electrician, he is often called out to do on-road work after hours.

Annette has always worked alongside Steve in the business and provided the clerical support that a struggling small business needs. However, this year has seen a double blow dealt to this hardworking Aussie battler and his family. The GST hit his business with a thud and he has seen a downturn in his normal trade of over 20%. He only said to me the other day that he knows this is a sign of the hard economic times that all families are facing, and he reflected on how hard it must be for other families as well. Of course, Steve is a bit like that; he thinks of others a lot more than he thinks of himself. He reflected on how these people are now probably driving around in unroadworthy vehicles because they cannot afford to have them fixed.

It was the Liberal coalition Government that dealt that blow to Steve with the introduction of the GST. But now the trifecta of bad luck has descended on him in the form of the Beattie Labor Government and the Main Roads Department as they set about to resume his house and land on

Pumicestone Road for the construction of the northern bypass of Caboolture. In the original plans for the bypass, Steve's house was not to be touched but, because of an oversight in relation to the duplication of the railway line between Caboolture and Landsborough, the on and off ramps had to be relocated and there was a need to resume the Ross homestead. Of course, this resumption process of Steve's and Annette's place is the end result.

Steve and Annette do not want to stand in the way of the betterment of Caboolture, but they expect just compensation for their house and land. There is no denying that the area where Steve bought his home is a predominantly lower socioeconomic area and that there are predominantly high-set, three bedroom homes. The compensation that has been set is probably reflective of those three-bedroom dwellings, not of the place that he possesses which he built himself. He made his house a home and he does not really want to sell it or move out, but he is being forced to do just that. He wants just compensation or to be compensated on just terms, as they say in that well-known movie *The Castle*.

I had a meeting in my office with three representatives of the Main Roads Department, Annette Ross and her legal adviser. Annette pleaded her case, in tears at times, but that appears to have fallen on some deaf bureaucratic ears. It appears that even though our home is our castle, it can be stripped away from us with no consideration given to the way we have extended it, built it up or dreamt of maintaining it over, as in this case, 16 years.

Annette even pleaded with them to find a similar home with the same amenities in the same area that they could move straight into but, alas, they could not. Annette herself had spent the last 12 months since the notification of the bypass changes trying to find one in that affordable price range that the Main Roads Department advised her that they would probably be offering her as compensation. As Annette has said, real estate agents have just laughed at her when she has tried to find a place similar to hers in that price range. She does not seem to be able to get some recompense from Main Roads in relation to the compensation for her home in its current state. It is no wonder Main Roads did not take up the challenge to go up and have a look, because they, too, knew that it would probably be virtually impossible to find one for that price where she currently is or in the Caboolture area.

I say to the Minister that it is not good enough by a long shot to offer the small compensation that they have been offered. If a home is not located for them straight away that they can move into, they cannot swap over that defence services home loan. So they will lose that cheap home loan that they currently have and it will be gone forever. Considering the way the banks are lending at the moment and the rates, they know that they have lost the ability to own a home such as the one they own now. Of course, they have already borrowed on the equity in the home for the business, so the business will be gone as well.

So in one stroke of a bureaucrat's pen another five people have been added to the unemployment queues at the Caboolture CES and four more children will suffer needlessly. Struggling sports clubs and organisations that Steve and Annette supported over time are going to be the other losers in the community. They know all about those possibilities. All this could be changed with the extra few thousand dollars that they have asked for as just and fair compensation, and which should be paid to them.

Steve and Annette are totally disgusted with the process and so are their many friends and supporters, most previous Labor supporters, too, I might add until this action to resume their home and not truly compensate them for it. I believe the Minister might have one more opportunity to act fair, reasonably and justly when Steve and Annette meet again with him and his representatives. I pray that, with a bit more action, a more beneficial outcome for them and the Caboolture community might result.

Speaking of the resumption process, I should say that the people of Ningi are also looking to more fruitful and beneficial discussions with the Main Roads Department and the representatives of Cardno MBK and Associates who are doing the study out there at the moment with respect to the proposed bypass of Ningi. This, I know, is under way. They would like me to highlight here that consideration should be rightfully given to the two options that they have written to the Minister for Transport about, and those two options have received the majority of community support at Ningi.

The two options are the pink option and the alternative blue corridor that has been highlighted. The alternative blue corridor option runs through land owned by Southern Pacific Sands. Southern Pacific Sands has turned out to be a reasonably community-minded company that is willing to work with the community and give it a better outcome in relation to the upgrade of Bribie road. The Bestman Road estate, which contains a large group of concerned residents, valued the input of Mr Ian Harrison from Southern Pacific Sands in putting forward this fifth option, the alternative blue corridor, that will take away the 90-odd trucks a day that rattle past the residents' doors on Bestman Road between Bribie road and the front gate of Southern Pacific Sands. The community wins out with this option, with no forced resumptions and a willing company sharing the use of its land, or a company that is at least willing to be part of the resumption process of the land that is required.

Bribie Island and Ningi residents have also asked about the blow-out in the cost of the upgrade of the footpath on the Bribie Island bridge. They want to know from the Minister what that cost is now. It started out as a \$350,000 upgrade of that path for a rail and some lighting. Now they are cutting through bridge girders of concrete and steel and building outward extensions, or passing bays. People are wondering about the final cost of the new work taking place on the bridge. At the outset, the cost of an external 2.5 metre walkway that was going to hang off the side of the bridge was estimated to be somewhere between \$800,000 and \$1m. At the time that was considered to be too expensive, although it was a far better option. The Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce and the people at Ningi and Pebble Beach want to know the cost of this poor alternative that is now being proposed for the bridge in placing passing bays on the 870 millimetre wide narrow strip of concrete that acts as a walkway. They also want to know what effect the cuts in the girders and the bridge will have on the bridge's strength. They wonder whether this option is being pursued because of a political single-mindedness; it was raised by the hopeful Labor aspirant, the previous member's wife, for the new electorate of Pumicestone. Is this the reason for the reluctance of the Minister to meet with the Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce and the Ningi District Community Association, which want to raise this matter with him?

The Bribie Island Chamber of Commerce is also looking for a deputation with the Minister for Police to discuss 24-hour policing on Bribie Island, because it is a rising issue there as well. I asked a question on notice of the Minister, who replied that 24-hour policing at Bribie Island was not an issue at this point but that down the track it might be considered. The people on Bribie Island consider that now is a more appropriate time to be discussing it, because there has been a rise in the rate of crime, traffic complaints, hoon complaints, teenage drunkenness and drugs. Bribie residents feel that the police response times to these complaints is not being dealt with adequately. The predominantly aged population on this idyllic paradise need to feel safe and secure in their homes. Having more police officers stationed over there and a 24-hour police presence on the island is something that they feel would be more beneficial to their needs and to the needs of the community in general. Surely the community feeling the strain of a distinct lack of police numbers should have some sort of say with respect to those—

Time expired.
