



Speech by

**VAUGHAN JOHNSON**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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Hansard 23 August 2000

**APPROPRIATION BILL, ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (3.16 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee C. I regret that the Estimates committee hearings have degenerated to a state that I am not happy with. I believe that the Minister could have provided more opportunity for the people of Queensland, and the committee in general, to have a greater insight into the Transport and Main Roads portfolio, about which I will primarily speak this afternoon.

I believe that there was either a deliberate attempt by the Minister to frustrate the operations of the Estimates committee, or it was incompetence. The Minister can take his pick as to which it was. The evidence presented at the Estimates committee hearings for Transport indicated that there is a crisis in the administration of Transport in Queensland. Unfortunately, every aspect of the Transport and Main Roads portfolio that was examined by the committee was experiencing major difficulties.

In the area of rail, we have the grave possibility of hundreds of rail jobs throughout this State being lost, the Cairns tilt train project blowing out and the promised relocation of the rail yards in that hotbed of Labor corruption, Townsville, now in doubt. The Minister has confirmed that the budget for the tilt train rolling stock has blown out from \$122m in Labor's election promise to over \$137m, and he has admitted that the track upgrade has jumped from \$20m to \$80m. Of course, the real cost of the track upgrade is far higher, but Labor is attempting to disguise these upgrades with other track work.

In relation to the Minister's assertion that some of this track work is being put in place by the board of Queensland Rail—surely the Minister is not trying to say that this money is not coming from the Government but from the board, which is making corporate decisions, thus hoodwinking the general public of Queensland in saying that the cost is not as high as it is? I can assure the Premier and the Minister that they may think that they are fooling the public with their Fluffygate strategy, but let me assure them that they are not fooling the rail workers of this State.

As I say, once again we have rail workers who are in fear of losing their jobs. They are not marching on the Treasurer's office for no reason at all. This morning in this House the Premier said that the coalition's policy on rail in this State is for privatisation. This afternoon I want to put on the record that the coalition has no agenda for the privatisation of Queensland Rail. It never has and it never will. As I predicted when the Minister made his politically inspired changes to Briztram, the promised light rail project has now vanished, leaving major contractors with multimillion-dollar expenses. Again, that is due to the incompetence of this Government. The tenderers themselves will be seeking compensation. I suggest that the Minister read his mail more carefully.

The inner-city busway is in total chaos, with the Minister cancelling the vital Roma Street-Queen Street section of the busway, as he was still unable to specify which route would be taken to access the bus station. The inner-northern busway concept is dependent on being able to get in and out of the Queen Street bus tunnel without delays to inner-city traffic.

The South East Transit Project is way over budget. I have been blamed for the blow-outs there, because I would not let it run down Grey Street. Why is the budget increase shown in the Budget papers for the Moreton region and not Brisbane? The budget for the Springwood bus interchange has blown out to almost double in a year—from \$3m to \$7.01m.

The Brisbane City Council bus system, which the State Government has been throwing dollars at, is cutting services yet again. It has cut weekly and monthly concessions, forcing more commuters into cars. So much for our public transport system.

The road toll continues to spiral, which is of grave concern to everybody. The speed camera project that we implemented in this State was never implemented for revenue raising, but I believe that is certainly on the agenda of the Labor administration at this time.

Our port authorities have been hijacked and the money invested by the authorities has been taken by the Government and replaced with a Bankcard debt that the port authorities are now required to service. This is creating serious implications for those authorities.

Main Roads has even changed its targets in the Budget documents from improving over time to maintenance of the existing standard. This is a frightening concept, with the Minister forced to concede that under Labor our roads will not improve. I am afraid that the Estimates committee hearings have confirmed that the Transport and Main Roads portfolio is certainly not moving forward in the way we had hoped.

I express my sincere appreciation also to the committee, especially to the chair, Julie Attwood, the member for Mount Ommaney, and to my colleagues on the committee, and also the research officer, Rob Hansen, who did a grand job. I apologise to Rob Hansen for any inconvenience that I may have caused him in changing my decision at a late hour on Monday afternoon.

In relation to the portfolio of the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, there are areas that I addressed and I thank him for the support he has given public housing in the western areas of the State. I trust that he will continue to do that.

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