



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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MOOLOOLABA HARBOUR ENTRANCE, MAINTENANCE DREDGING

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (10.43 p.m.): I take this opportunity to speak about an important issue in my electorate of Maroochydore. I refer to the silting up of the Mooloolaba harbour entrance. This important port services a seafood industry worth about \$80 million a year. In addition, the recreational boating industry is worth many millions of dollars. However, over the past several months we have seen the worst silting up of this harbour mouth since it was built quite a few decades ago.

When I took a deputation to Transport Minister Bredhauer on 26 June, he was against the dredging of the river mouth. He said that he would monitor it. When we asked him to put dredging approvals in place, he claimed that it would take four to six months for the appropriate dredging approvals to come about. It has since been proven that that was not the case. After much public agitation from boaties who were saying this entrance was dangerous—in fact, three days after the deputation—a child almost drowned beneath a capsized boat. After much agitation from the community, the minister finally relinquished and said that the dredging approvals would be put in place. I welcome that announcement; it is what we lobbied for and it is what the community called for. However, we were very disappointed that it took several months to get that undertaking from the minister. We would have preferred a more timely response.

This highlights the need for the government to have a clear program of ongoing maintenance dredging to ensure that such incredible delays never occur again. The commercial fishermen knew that the bar was dangerous and that one of the safest ports in Queensland had become almost impossible to navigate 24 hours a day in most tidal conditions. This is a serious issue. They were saying that it was dangerous and that the port was virtually closed. Finally, the minister relinquished and agreed to dredge. However, it should not have reached this point. I call on the government to commit to a regular program of maintenance dredging of this important harbour so that we never again see commercial fishermen threatening to go to New South Wales because that state is prepared to put out the welcome mat and provide a safe harbour.

It is important to understand that this has been a trained river mouth for decades. It was one of the safest river mouths. However, under this government regular maintenance dredging has fallen by the wayside. This should not be allowed to happen again. We urge the government to fast-track the approvals and ensure that the appropriate dredging is undertaken and that this important commercial industry and recreational boaties have a safe, navigable channel.