



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard 16 October 2003

MOOLOOLAH RIVER

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydoore—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): This morning I heard the Transport Minister talk about the dredging being completed at the Mooloolah River entrance. I was pleased to see that dredging completed. However, I was still concerned that the Transport Minister was maintaining that the situation had become dangerous only recently. In fact, the entrance to the Mooloolaba Harbour had been dangerous for months. I had taken a deputation to the minister three to four months earlier from some of the stakeholders in that area after representations from a wide range of very concerned community members.

At that deputation with the Transport Minister, he proceeded to tell me that even if he was going to approve dredging it would take three to four months to get the relevant dredging approvals in place. That consequently was proven to be completely wrong. However, at that time he refused to take action. Only a matter of days later a boat overturned because of the very dangerous entrance to the Mooloolah River and a child almost drowned. As a result of the deputation that I took to the minister, he did give a commitment that officers from his department would meet with the commercial operators that work out of Mooloolaba Harbour.

Members have to realise that there is an \$80 million seafood industry that works out of the Mooloolaba Harbour in addition to a significant recreational industry. It is a very important jobs industry to the Sunshine Coast and it is very important to those who enjoy recreational boating. However, the Mooloolah River entrance had become extremely dangerous due to one of the worst build-ups of sand that even old-timers had seen at this particular point. It is imperative that we need to see quicker and more timely action in the future from government to ensure that we do not have this situation arising to this extent again.

The National/Liberal coalition has given a commitment that there will be dredging and appropriate works undertaken on a regular basis to ensure that there is safe access to this river. We believe that there needs to be a clear message from government that it will act in a more timely manner in the future.

As a result of that meeting with the deputation I took to the minister, those commercial operators told the department very strongly that the entrance to the Mooloolah River was not safe at that time—a fact that was disputed by the department. When there are people who are operating boats that can be worth \$1 million and they are saying, 'We're telling you now, this is not safe' and the department is still saying it is safe, then it is a matter of grave concern. It is a matter of the utmost seriousness that the department and the government did not listen and do something about this sooner. It is time it was recognised that these issues are extremely important. Industry was threatening to go to New South Wales and take those jobs away. There must be a plan in future to ensure more timely action to address these issues.

Time expired.