



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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TRANSPORT

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (6.48 p.m.): This evening I wish to put a bit of perspective on the debate in relation to local government. I am disappointed that from the government side we have heard about nothing more than what is happening in Brisbane and on the coast. The minister's amendment refers to plans for south-east Queensland, southern Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Gladstone, Rockhampton, the Border Rivers, the eastern downs; and Wide Bay. It mentions public transport in south-east Queensland, including the South East Busway and the Inner Northern Busway. Government members are like a flock of seagulls; they are all perched on the coast and never want to think about anywhere else. There is more to Queensland than the south-east corner. It is about time they thought about that. A lot of rural issues are particularly important to people in those areas, who also support the government.

Importantly, the member for Gregory mentioned Roads to Recovery—a magnificent program. Government members have been cutting back state government funding and using some of the Roads to Recovery money, and telling the councils that they are already getting their allocation. That has not been in the spirit of the way that funding was meant to be provided.

I want to talk also about TIDS—Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme—funding. It has provided significant support for local roads upgrading, focusing on improved access to communities, national parks and recreational areas; support for economic development; improved safety and traffic operations; and bike networks and set-down facilities at schools. This program has been well supported in many areas. However, the following changes have sought to make the program more attractive and relevant to a wider range of local governments.

We need increased flexibility in the eligibility criteria to increase the application of the program to more councils. We need increased flexibility on the subsidy level from the current 50 per cent, having regard to council circumstances. We need an increase in the annual funding allocation, including an extra \$5 million for works on local roads of regional significance identified under the recently introduced main roads and local government roads management and investment alliance. That is where the government can put some thought and make some vast improvements. We know and understand that the government has to do a lot of work down here in the south-east corner in relation to planning.

I will give honourable members another example of where transport costs are totally ridiculous. There is a shire in my electorate called the Bungil shire which has a lot of forestry in that region. The council wants to amend section 52 of the Forestry Act 1959 to the effect that councils are not required to pay royalties on quarry materials irrespective of their source where the material is used to maintain or upgrade roads that provide access to commercial forestry areas. This particular case relates to the Womblebank Gap Road and the Westgrove Road which have been traditionally used by timber harvesters. In 2002-03 the council received a subsidy of \$5,070 towards the maintenance of those roads. It cost the council \$1 million to seal the remaining 11 kilometres and it spends an average \$130,000 a year on this road. Some assistance is necessary.

It is illogical that the council should be required to pay royalties, for instance, for gravel extracted from the forestry area which is to be used on the adjacent shire road that has been damaged by the harvesting of timber from the same forestry area. The Queensland government receives royalties from

the sale of timber, but the council receives nothing except to pick up the bill to fix the road that has been damaged in the forestry operations, one of which is for royalties. The same can be said for oils, minerals and gas, except councils do have a small opportunity there to charge in those particular areas.

I turn now to the issue of school bus transport, which is very important to all of us. We are having dreadful trouble in my electorate with school bus transport because the government bureaucrats are being so picky in relation to the rules and regulations. People have to use one particular road in my electorate to travel to school even though it is not an all-weather road. When it rains they cannot get to the school on that road and, therefore, they are not eligible for any particular assistance. We have to change that. There is also a very serious situation in relation to the inspection of vehicles. People just cannot get an inspection of a truck in under three months.

Time expired.