



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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SEQ REGIONAL PLAN

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.07 p.m.): Planning for growth in Queensland is not just about putting lines on maps; it is about building the social and physical infrastructure to provide jobs and services, to protect the environment and to uphold a high quality of life for Queenslanders. The state National Party supports the principles of the South-East Queensland Regional Plan, which is mainly about providing clear go and no-go areas for urban growth for local governments to implement within their planning schemes.

However, we reserve the right to scrutinise its implementation and to continue to highlight that its success or failure will depend upon timely infrastructure delivery. Infrastructure is a word gaining greater top of mind awareness as Queensland's roads turn into parking lots, homes lose power due to the mismanagement of the electricity system and communities risk running out of water under this Beattie Labor government.

The state National Party has been talking about the underspend and mismanagement of infrastructure under this Labor government for years. Unfortunately, the Beattie government believed its own publicity and continued to put out press releases instead of delivering. Physical infrastructure spending has fallen from 28 per cent of the state budget under the coalition to 20 per cent under the Beattie Labor government. Roads spending as a proportion of the capital budget has fallen from 23 per cent of the capital budget to only 14 per cent under the Beattie Labor government. Every time people sit in gridlock, they will remember that that is as a result of this government's mismanagement.

We welcome the Institution of Engineers' infrastructure report card on Queensland which the Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, mentioned earlier. However, we also believe that there needs to be empowerment to the Auditor-General to undertake performance audits across government which include infrastructure maintenance and development. If this had been in place, we would not have seen the debacle where this government covered up the breakdown in the electricity system, the cover-up where it stripped away dividends of hundreds of millions of dollars only to see the system fail and only to see a situation where it is now having to talk about reinvesting back into the system that it broke. But the people who will pay that price are Queenslanders as their power fails.

When the infrastructure plan which is to accompany the South-East Queensland Regional Plan is released in April 2005, we will be looking to see whether it only caters for catch-up or whether in fact it really does cater for growth. I would go further and say that it is also time for a complete and independent audit of the state's infrastructure needs. We just cannot trust this government. We just cannot trust it to get it right, because it has a track record of getting it wrong. Population growth is not a surprise. Governments have a responsibility to plan for it and should not act surprised and hard done by when it happens. Over a 30-year period, the rate of population growth in Queensland has been high but fairly constant—that is, from a 2.5 per cent annual increase in 1972, a high of 3.5 per cent in 1981 and around about 2.3 per cent annual growth in 2002-03. Also not surprisingly, most of the growth has been centred on the south-east corner of the state.

I also want to talk about the vexed issue of density and make some important comments. The state National Party believes it is vital that genuine consultation is allowed upon this plan given that communities are being asked to take considerably higher density levels. I recognise that there is a dilemma where social values opposed to urban sprawl clash with another social value which opposes density. While urban sprawl must be contained on the basis of good town planning, the answer is not simply to impose greater density over the top of existing communities without listening to them. People will not tolerate the imposition of high-density living upon their suburbs and towns if their vision for quiet, leafy and attractive suburbs is ignored and dog-box development is imposed. Their views must be heard and demand for greater infrastructure which upholds these values must be supported, particularly with roads, public transport and high-quality urban design. They are terrified of having densification which takes away the quietness of their suburbs and urban design which undermines social cohesion and their quality of life.

The other issue which is yet to be addressed by the government is the impact upon unviable agricultural land which is left out of the urban footprint, and we are yet to see an economic plan—

Time expired.