



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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### INTEGRATED PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.45 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this legislation but to state strongly that, although good regional planning has bipartisan support, we need to ensure that it goes hand in hand with proper regional infrastructure planning and implementation. Certainly, Queensland is at a crossroads, but the tragedy is that people are already experiencing the impact of severe gridlock, the threat of not enough urban water supply in some of our major growth corridors, and severe environmental degradation as people increasingly pump pollution into the air as they sit in traffic. The problem has already come upon us and the warning signs have been out there for years.

Under the previous Local Government Minister, planning fell off the agenda and it was not driven. Industry and the community recognised that there needed to be a focus on planning and that there needed to be certain powers to coordinate that focus. Thus we have seen the birth of the Office of Urban Management and the development of these new coordinated planning processes.

As my colleague the shadow minister for local government, Ted Malone, outlined earlier, there is much in this legislation that the opposition supports. But our concerns are that there needs to be a mutual obligation from the state government in regard to its responsibility to deliver the infrastructure that supports appropriate growth in the regions. If we do not have a state government that is bound to deliver that infrastructure in a timely way, these regional plans will fail. It is not enough to have lines on maps that bind local governments; we must also have a cast-iron guarantee that the state government, in its demographic planning and implementation of infrastructure, will also come to the party. Unfortunately, to date we have not seen that. It is now projected that congestion on south-east Queensland roads, and particularly in Brisbane, will cost the average family about \$15,000 a year in additional costs. That is through the additional travelling time spent sitting in traffic and the cost added to goods. That imposition upon people who cannot afford it came about because the government talked about planning and talked about infrastructure but did not deliver it.

We have an amendment before the House that seeks to bind the state government in regard to being accountable for its own public sector developments. But the issue as to when the state government gets forced into delivering on critical infrastructure and not just having an interminable planning process and no implementation with deadlines is still one that is not resolved by legislation before this House. There is now a situation in which, in the past six years under Labor governments, capital infrastructure has fallen from some 28 per cent of the state budget to only 20 per cent of the state budget. Six years ago, under the National-Liberal coalition, about 28 per cent of the budget was spent on infrastructure. In six years of Labor governments, that figure has fallen to 20 per cent. If we drill down further into that funding for infrastructure for the state under the Beattie Labor government, we see that the road component of that capital budget has fallen from about 23 per cent to 14 per cent. Is it any wonder that people are sitting in gridlock? But that situation has not been addressed by the current budget that we have just seen passed by the House and it is not addressed by this legislation before the House.

It is time for the government to do more than just pay lip-service to dealing with growth in south-east Queensland. It is time for a commitment that involves money and implementation time frames. Most importantly, it is about not just regional plans but also regional infrastructure plans. I believe it is time we saw a similar process to the one that applies to roads. There is not enough funding of the road program, but one thing the Roads Implementation Program does have is an outline of the time frame in which those roads are expected to be built over the next few years. It is time we saw a detailed regional infrastructure plan with time frames applied also to the regions.

One of the issues I have raised federally is the fact that the Australian Bureau of Statistics' statistical regions are very non-specific to the reality of what the regions look like. In other words, the Sunshine Coast is lumped in with the Gold Coast and also with areas such as Beaudesert. There has been a commitment to change those ABS regions. I am pleased it has listened to that concern. To date it has meant that, at all levels of government, the immediate figures as to the actual spend in the real regions, not just the ABS statistical divisions, are hidden.

With the statistics available to it, the state government already had the opportunity to provide specific infrastructure spends and outlines of those plans, regardless of the ABS statistical divisions. I would urge it to release those. I would urge it to have a program which outlines for the next five or 10 years the infrastructure development spend it proposes for water. We know that there is a shortage in relation to roads. That is something that does need to see an additional contribution from the state government, because it has significantly fallen off as a proportion of government spending. That is why people are sitting in gridlock and are facing these exorbitant costs that are now being projected, with even worse gridlock into the future.

Other infrastructure provision is needed in relation to schools. There has been a big tendency in recent years to rush to get infrastructure put in place at the last minute. In some cases that does not deliver the best product for the best price. Something that concerns me is that demographics and planning are often hidden from the public. We certainly saw that in relation to Health. We continue to see that with Health in terms of the real regional plans. A lot of times it is a hidden process. It talks about consultation, but the detail of that infrastructure and the plans for growth in services are actually hidden. I do not believe that is about managing for growth in the south-east and in Queensland.

A huge issue this legislation does not really address is affordable housing. It is something that I believe needs to be dealt with. Before I hear people say, 'It is all about public housing,' I have to say that I have news for them. When the available market is restricted—this will happen with market supply in a number of existing urban areas—there is a restriction on affordable housing. Under the current housing commission regime, there are people who do not qualify for public housing who still cannot afford to live in those areas. So even if public housing is available in those areas, they fall outside the eligibility criteria for public housing. A significant issue related to how we effectively and ethically deal with affordable housing in this state has to be where the growth goes. I urge this government not to just dump the growth into the backblocks of Queensland without providing regional and rural infrastructure, because many of these people are the very ones who need access to good public transport and need access to services that enable them to connect with where the jobs are and enable them to keep their children within educational facilities, not find themselves on the fringe of society.

Putting lines on a map and saying, 'We are dealing with growth,' is not the total answer, unless we deal with these complexities as well. We need to make sure that people are not pushed to the fringes once they are told, 'This is where growth can't go.' We understand that there have to be limits on where growth goes, but those people have to go somewhere. We have to deal with that.

The issue of proactive infrastructure is something that probably has not been dealt with very well by any government. At the moment we see that this government has failed to deal with obvious growth which has been well forecasted for a long time. Proactive infrastructure is about placing infrastructure where it actually helps develop new industries, so it is ahead of its time. This is an issue we need to look at, particularly with regard to regional development. The issue with south-east Queensland is not only about the impact of growth within this increasingly dense and congested part of the state; it should also be about how well Queensland as a state is dealing with regional development. There is very high unemployment in other regions of Queensland. There is also opportunity within those regions. Sometimes there is underutilised infrastructure in other parts of the state. Sometimes there is underutilised infrastructure that, with better regional development and job opportunities, could lead to a sharing of the benefits of growth across other regions, a better utilisation of existing infrastructure and expansion within the capacity of some of the infrastructure which is there.

In addition to the issues of roads and public transport, I know that my colleagues have talked about water. Thanks to this government, the Gold Coast only has about three years of supply left. Sections of the Sunshine Coast have about 15 years of supply. It is not enough just to say, 'These are the lines on maps.' There needs to be a delivery of infrastructure—and not when the crisis is upon us, as we now see in relation to roads, because then the cost of delivery, the planning process and the urgency will often result in mistakes being made.

I would also like to address the issue of flood plains, which is a significant issue for the Sunshine Coast. There are a range of geographic areas in which sugarcane has been grown, but we have seen that this is one of the best crops that can be grown in the river plains of the Maroochy River valleys. There are very few marketable alternatives for the people who are left within these flood plains. There is very real concern about the push for development of these areas. I have stated in this place and prior to coming into parliament, in the lead-up to the last election, that we should not be putting development on the flood plains. As I have mentioned before, the problem has been the inadequacy of a lot of the flood studies which have been carried out. I renew my call to the government to help fund, with the best technology available, an updated flood study. I am concerned that this is something which has not been handled well. If we were to look at real flood events against some of the models that have been used, we would see that huge mistakes have been made in understanding the impacts of building upon the flood plains. This is a matter of great concern. It is one that I raise again in this place.

Another issue that is very relevant to the Sunshine Coast—once again, it is incumbent upon government to be involved—relates to change of land use. We do not want to see weeds grow up and salination come through with the failure of floodgates when there is no longer maintenance of those areas with these river plain cane lands. There need to be viable alternatives. To date, funding for the soil testing that I know was asked for by government agencies in order to look at some of the green alternatives in those areas still has not eventuated. I would urge a reconsideration of that.

All of these things are interrelated. These are complex issues, but they cannot be ignored. In terms of the future of managing growth, we need to make sure that people are dealt with equitably—that people are dealt with in such a way that their concerns are not lost in the political barrage of those who have 70 per cent of the seats in this state, that people's concerns really are listened to.

I would particularly urge the government to address the issue of growth in regard to where affordable housing will be and the infrastructure connections in that area. The regional infrastructure plans, the need to deliver upon those key infrastructure needs in a timely way and the need to have those published where they are available for public consultation, where they are available for input from key stakeholder groups as well as the wider community, are something I sincerely believe will deliver better outcomes.

I live in the south-east. I love living in the south-east. I am concerned that the infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth. If the implementation of regional plans in this new planning process is to be really successful in its outcomes, then we have to have the infrastructure. We have to have the state government putting its hands in its pockets and doing the job, rather than just talking about it, having interminable time frames for repeated plans that go on forever and a bureaucracy which is about looking good rather than doing the job.