



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.25 p.m.): This morning the Premier talked about the importance of social infrastructure. He talked about the capacity that is needed. That is certainly something on which we all agree. I suspect that he was trying to take focus away from the fact that this government has not invested in hard infrastructure to the degree that is required for the growing population. Under the coalition, 28 per cent of the state budget was being spent on infrastructure. That has fallen to only 20 per cent of the state budget under this Beattie Labor government, despite the growth in our population. That has had a huge impact.

Let us look at the balance of the figures and at the social infrastructure issue. It seems strange that the Premier wanted to make a great fanfare about social infrastructure and the support of his government. Yet in the last few months we have seen a change in contracts with a number of community groups. These contracts mean, particularly in the health arena, that local community groups will no longer be delivering key services directly to those local communities unless they go back and negotiate a contract with the successful tenderer. That is a statewide tender. This has happened in a number of areas.

I really question why the state government has gone down this path. Tenders have been let to organisations that had no prior arrangements and no prior contracts with the local community groups that previously were doing that work. The local community groups are still expected to deliver those services but only after they have gone back and entered into negotiations with the successful tenderer. It is strange, it is bizarre and it has damaged that social infrastructure that the Premier was talking about this morning.

I have a great deal of admiration and respect for the hard work of the volunteers and the staff of a number of organisations. I mention in particular SCIVAA, which is an intravenous drug awareness organisation on the Sunshine Coast. It deals with tough issues and it deals with people who are in tough places in their lives. Their courage in the care of those people has to be commended. I feel very strongly that the way its contract has been dismantled by the state government is most unfortunate. It has caused a great deal of distress in the community and there is a great deal of concern that it will not be able to deliver to the extent it could before.

In recognising social infrastructure we have to recognise that there needs to be a review of the way those contracts are let so that probity is still met but that there is not this process that results in great organisations, widespread through the community, doing the on-the-ground work, finding that they are kicked in the guts a few years later and that their volunteers potentially will be lost.