



Speech by

Hon. Paul Lucas

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard Thursday, 19 August 2004

APPROPRIATION BILLS; ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Hon. P.T. LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (12.56 p.m.): I might deal with the issues that have been raised in good faith by the member for Toowoomba South. I will have a look at the plane services in Toowoomba. The length of the runway is an issue for long distance flights. Large planes are needed for these flights and whether that can be safely accommodated there I do not know, but we will have a look at that.

I congratulate the Toowoomba community on its attitude in relation to the second range crossing. It is very vigorous in its advocacy for a second range crossing, and I do not blame it at all for that. It is a good idea. But it has also been quite mature and sensible in the debate because there is a realisation that, if the Ipswich Motorway is not fixed, it does not matter much in terms of whether people are going to or from Toowoomba if they cannot get through that part as well. That is why I have been so forthright in pushing the federal government to do something about the Ipswich Motorway. Notwithstanding the fact that Cameron Thompson is doing his best to stuff everybody up, we hope we can get a commitment from them. We have a commitment from the Latham opposition to fix the Ipswich Motorway. When we have fixed that and cleared other bottlenecks such as the Gatton bypass—that project was well done and I thank the Commonwealth for that—we then have the question of the second range crossing. It will have to be a toll road but I am told that economically it will probably be cheaper for trucks to go on the toll road and around the back of Wellcamp.

The state government has not been resting on its laurels. We have not got all the money in this most recent AusLink round from the Commonwealth for the land acquisitions for the corridor. We have written to them about that. They ought to do that. They have been a bit naughty in not doing that. We have also identified the corridor for the Gowrie to Grandchester rail line. That will also be important. The member raised the issue of TransLink not being in Toowoomba, and I know the member for Toowoomba North has raised it with me as well. I am sympathetic to that. I am a bit of a Toowoomba fan, I have to say. I got one of my university degrees from the University of Southern Queensland. I am a fan of the great city that it is. I think ultimately the lifestyle that it offers will be very well linked with Brisbane where we can get proper rail access up there and link it in with the south-east Queensland public transport world. So please be aware that is something that is a priority to me.

The member for Nicklin raised a number of matters including duplicating the rail line between Landsborough and Nambour. That is a good idea, and I am not disputing that at all, but one needs to be mature and sensible about this fact: we will commit the funds to duplicate the line to Landsborough. Again, what would be the point if you had it duplicated from Landsborough to Nambour and then went back on a single track between Nambour and Caboolture? There would be no point in doing that whatsoever. We have to be sensible about this.

There is a significant amount of money involved, but I am glad to say that the budget is a good budget for rail and the outlook for rail is good in the future. We understand that the future for Queensland Rail is not Queensland Rail in the past; it will be Queensland Rail in the future and it will be grown. It will be grown in areas such as on the Sunshine Coast with the CAMCOS corridor study.

The member for Maroochydore might want to make her little points about decisions here and infrastructure there. The decisions that I deal with now are decisions that were made 20 years ago, and decisions that I make now are decisions that will matter 20, 30 and 40 years into the future. That is the nature of infrastructure portfolios. Things cannot be done in two seconds and things cannot be wrecked in two seconds. People need to spend time, effort and planning on this, and that is what I am trying to do in relation to our important road infrastructure needs.

Back to more general things, the 2004-05 budget consists of \$1.7 billion for Queensland Transport and \$2.3 billion for the Department of Main Roads, including \$1.3 billion for regional roadworks, and operations in corporate and technical services. It also contains \$1.1 billion in new money for roads and transport over four years, which is on top of the \$951 million provided since December 2003.

This is a government that recognises the need to increase spending on our roads and transport network. One only had to look recently at the Road Solution report in the *Courier-Mail*. Here it is. It is actually quite a good contribution to the debate that they made in this regard. It can be seen from that that Queensland's average annual spend on our roads is \$228.90 per head, more than twice Victoria's spend of \$89.20. That is the problem that confronts us in Queensland. We are spending a lot on our roads and we need to spend more. I am the first to concede that we need to spend even more. The *Courier-Mail* report—not me—notes the increases in our budget this year. But it is a challenge when Victoria, a densely populated state, can spend less than half of what we spend. We have to spend more. I do not mind that in the sense that I am proud that we have a decentralised state because it will lead to economic success in the future that we are not all huddled into a little corner of the state like they are in Western Australia, but it is a challenge for us in terms of infrastructure.

The members opposite want to talk about road funding and the federal government want a pat on the back for AusLink. I have a lot more to say, but time has escaped me.