



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Thursday, 11 August 2005

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; ESTIMATES F

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.58 pm): I was going to thank the chairman for his chairmanship, and I will with regard to the committee meetings. But I have to correct the record because there is nothing pro forma about my statement of reservations, and I urge him to read it. I did note that the time for Transport and Main Roads had been cut back by the government with regard to this estimates process.

A government member: It was cut back by the committee.

Miss SIMPSON: No, it was not cut back by the committee. I opposed the time frame for Transport and Main Roads and I made it quite clear that there had been a cutback. The government members tried to dispute that but it was noted for the record, and I note now on the parliamentary record, as per my statement of reservations, that last year over four hours, nearly five hours, were allocated to the Transport and Main Roads portfolio. This year only three hours were allocated to the Transport and Main Roads portfolio in the estimates process.

I believe that is extremely disappointing considering that the three hours is then cut in half and there is only really an hour and a half which is available for the scrutiny of the Transport and Main Roads proportion of the portfolios in this estimates process. That was something that I strongly disagreed with, and I restate my disagreement in this forum, as I have previously done in the committee. No-one should be under a misunderstanding that there was any agreement to that, because that is not correct.

What we saw with Main Roads was a number of very important issues, and one was the issue of the stone mastic asphalt surface near Federal, south of Gympie. Finally, the government announced that it was going to bring forward the resurfacing of this road to this year—it was due to commence next year—due to the safety concerns with regard to that road surface. This is something that we called for. It is amazing that at the time the government said that it would do it next year and that seemed to be a satisfactory time frame, but after the weight of public concern and the concerns that we raised the government brought it forward. I am pleased that it has been brought forward, because it was the department itself that released the documents that said that this road surface at this location was dangerous. That then set in train our questioning regarding where else it has been used, and we wanted some independent checking of that process.

During the estimates hearing I tabled departmental minutes which established that the department's technical experts report into these issues—being the stone mastic asphalt and other issues—already exists and was reviewed by senior management on 30 June 2005. I requested that the minister provide that report, and the answer provided to the estimates committee was that it was a draft and therefore more work was being done on that draft. We are still waiting to see the final report or reports released.

I am calling on the minister once again to release these reports. Make them public. Do not just put out a press release saying that everything is fine. We have seen from the way that this government has acted to date that is not the case. We also provided documentation to the estimates process about an internal departmental memo or minute which showed that there was concern about the replacement of

timber bridges, and it was not being progressed in accordance with risk assessment, meaning that some bridges which are of higher risk are being kept in place while lower risk infrastructure is being replaced. This is also a public safety issue and we will continue to pursue this.

The almost mythical Tugun bypass issue was raised, and on the basis of the minister's response it appears that there is little prospect that any meaningful construction of the bypass will be achieved in this current financial year. That continues to be a major issue of concern.

I am pleased that the Sunshine Motorway bridge has been brought forward by 12 months. That is something that I have lobbied hard for, and it has been a major issue of contention on the Sunshine Coast. We will continue to scrutinise the delivery of that project given that an existing duplication process between Maroochydore Road and Buderim Avenue is currently not finished and was due to be finished in January this year. Quite frankly, continuing to blame the weather just does not wash.

There is another issue that I would like to put on the record regarding the Ipswich Motorway in Toowong and the capacity issues which were raised. The minister advised that the only proposal to upgrade capacity of that infrastructure will be the addition of bus transit lanes in each direction. Current infrastructure documents indicate that the construction of these lanes will not commence before 2009.

Time expired.