



Speech by

**Fiona Simpson**

**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

Hansard Thursday, 27 October 2005

---

## **STATE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS ORGANISATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (8.48 pm): It is pleasing to see that the state government has adopted National Party policy with regard to the Coordinator-General's role, particularly the need to beef up the powers of this very important position and placing it, as has happened in recent times, under the Premier's department. We support the policy for this important role to come under the Premier's department not just because it was our idea but also because it is good for Queensland as there is a real need to see infrastructure delivered much faster than what we have seen over the last eight years. There was a lot of catch-up to do with capital works in Queensland because of what has been seven to eight years of inaction under the state Labor government.

The backlog in infrastructure in Queensland means that south-east Queensland will face gridlock over the next few years, worse than what we already see. The threatened costs to the average household are between \$3,000 and \$4,000, and with soaring petrol prices those figures will grow far beyond what the current estimates are. It is a huge impost on people's budgets but it is also a huge impost upon their quality of life and the environment with increased emissions. Buses and rail networks are an important part of the overall transport solutions, and they also need to have appropriate investment and a coordinated program of delivery.

But we must not forget roads, because there is already a network of roads which is failing to meet today's needs let alone the next 10 to 20 years. In many cases much of the arterial road network still has only two lanes. That is the case with many main roads throughout Queensland and even in the south-east. This means that we not only have gridlock issues but also real potential for an escalation of a threat in an emergency. Emergency vehicles do not have access to these sites and there is not an alternative network that dovetails with the arterial network.

The population growth in Queensland should not surprise anyone who has studied the figures. Over the last 30 years population growth has been high but it has also been highly predictable. Population growth alone cannot be used by the Beattie Labor government in Queensland as an excuse for infrastructure failure. The failure in infrastructure delivery in the last seven years of this ALP government has been because of bad planning, not because of any surprises about population growth. We only have to consider the capital works figures to see that, despite the continuing growth in population, the Beattie Labor government was in fact reducing in real terms road funding and reducing in percentage terms the amount of money available for roads and capital spending overall.

About a billion dollars was not invested by the Beattie Labor government. It was clawed back by the Beattie government over its term of government. Now we see that there has been funding put into the forward allocations with a 20-year plan. I certainly welcome the concept of 20-year infrastructure plans, but the reason there has to be such a balloon, particularly over the next four to eight years, is that the baseline infrastructure has not been delivered in the last eight years. Most of the infrastructure that the Coordinator-General is now in a position to have to crack the whip about is infrastructure that is needed today, not in 10

or 20 years time. The real needs for the next 10 to 20 years are not even a glimmer in the eye of the Treasurer at this stage.

We have seen record taxes brought in by this government. We have high growth, a high-growth tax environment, but a fall-off in infrastructure delivery. The government cannot blame population growth and it cannot blame the tax environment. We have seen an extraordinary situation regarding what is probably a fairly centralised federal administration. We have had GST dollars handed back to the states—a growth tax handed back to the states—in order to fund the growth that they experienced. We have seen \$700 million over and above what was anticipated flowing back into the coffers here in Queensland. We have also seen record coal and other mineral royalties. Add to this stamp duty from the booming property market and this government has been flush with cash. Yet still it has been incapable of delivering in key social infrastructure areas and in the hard infrastructure areas.

It was interesting when the Premier announced that the program for the infrastructure plan was to be rolled out. Trust him; it was always going to happen. Then only a couple of months later the small print of that announcement was whispered: 'We might just have a difficulty in delivering this program on time and on budget because we have just found out that there is a difficulty accessing people to do the work.' It should not be rocket science to realise that, if we are not delivering on a baseline infrastructure capital works program over seven to eight years, and then suddenly we want to ramp up into a more substantial program, we are not going to have apprentices, we are not going to have people in industry who are in a position to take that up to the level it needs to be taken up to. The challenges that will be delivered with the higher cost of delivering that are very much the fault of government—this government. It has no-one else to blame but itself.

Unfortunately, that is true in many areas of capital infrastructure. I want to quote the road funding figures as a percentage of the capital budget. We have seen a situation where capital funding as a percentage of the overall budget used to be nearly 30 per cent under a National-Liberal coalition government in this state. In this financial year it is 24 per cent. Over the last few years it has dipped down to 24 per cent and 23 per cent. It was 20 per cent in 2002-03. It bumped along at that same figure until the budget just past where the government allocated 24 per cent of the budget.

This is significant in real terms, because if we are going to invest in the growth of our state we need to invest in our infrastructure in order to have a sustainable environment economically and socially. In 2003 what we saw with roads as a proportion of funding was that the capital budget as a proportion of the overall budget had fallen off under the Beattie Labor government. But for the roads on which we are experiencing gridlock today, and which will cost the average household \$4,000 to \$6,000 over the next 10 years due to increasing petrol costs, this government was investing only 14 per cent of the capital budget. It is not rocket science; it is predictable. If we do not build the infrastructure, we have failed infrastructure, and then we have to suddenly deliver the infrastructure in a time frame with increased costs and the pressures of having a work force available to do it.

I want to address some key aspects of this legislation. It is interesting that the legislation has been brought on for debate tonight. We know that the department was not expecting it, and we know that a lot of Labor members of parliament were not expecting it. It is probably typical of the way that this government manages most things. There was a big rush of Labor members racing around trying to fill the speaking list when they realised they had to address a bill that was not due to come on tonight. This legislation, as I said, addresses the issue of beefing up some of the Coordinator-General's powers. We certainly support the role of having a strong Coordinator-General's position to ensure more seamless delivery of key projects across the many areas of government.

With regard to this particular piece of legislation, the main impetus has been the agreement reached between the Premier and the Brisbane Lord Mayor on the process for the north-south bypass tunnel, the NSBT. The memorandum of understanding for this project was signed on 28 February. One of the issues that was raised was the need for legislative change to facilitate that process, particularly to enable the Coordinator-General to evaluate changes made to a project by a proponent of a significant project following the completion of the Coordinator-General's report evaluating the environmental impact statement but before the project commences. This legislation also needed to provide that certain works approved by the Governor in Council can be carried out by an approved person who has entered into an agreement with a local body to carry out those works.

In simple terms, working up public-private partnerships and entering these agreements to deliver infrastructure with new funding mechanisms is complex. One of the challenges is that the tenderers involved may go through the process of environmental considerations but when it comes to the delivery stage of the process some of those components may have changed. We need to provide reasonable powers to the Coordinator-General so as to not have to go right back through that process and start again. It is a reasonable amendment and it is one that we are happy to support.