



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL (ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A)

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (2.30 pm): I am pleased to participate in this portion of the debate on the estimates committee reports, and particularly the report of Estimates Committee A. I want to refer specifically to the portfolio of State Development. Up until the estimates process I was responsible for the shadow state development portfolio for the state coalition. As of this week, I have taken over the shadow transport and main roads portfolio, which I am delighted to do.

In terms of the portfolio of State Development, I would particularly like to talk about the issue of infrastructure and the fact that we now have a department that essentially has very little primary responsibility for delivering major infrastructure. During the estimates process I brought to the attention of the Treasurer and the state development minister that, despite the changes in that department that have seen many of its responsibilities go to the Premier's department—like a lot of other ministerial responsibilities in other portfolios—the web site had not been updated to reflect that in all the areas where the organisational chart for State Development was listed. On questioning the Treasurer and the minister for state development, it was confirmed that those responsibilities had been transferred. However, as to where the line of responsibility finished and started for major projects, that certainly is not clear. That is reflected when talking to businesses throughout the state.

The primary responsibility for public-private partnerships in the organisational chart has been shifted to the Premier's department. Let us hope that more things happen now than what have happened in the past. About six years ago the Premier announced 17 potential projects to involve the private sector in delivering public infrastructure, yet I understand that, of those 17 potential public-private partnerships, only one has been progressed. Regardless of whether the state development minister is responsible for this or the relevant minister is now the Premier owing to the change in responsibility in the portfolios, we still see an inability by this government to grasp the need to engage with the private sector. Perhaps we will get another press release yet again from the Premier saying 'Yes, things have changed and it is really happening.' But we have to look at the government's record. We have all heard that before. Other than the progression of one public-private partnership, nothing else has been delivered. The way forward with infrastructure in this state will certainly require a new way of doing things, such as an engagement with the private sector and a true commitment to looking at the appropriate areas of benefit. That is the only way we are going to deliver a number of projects within an improved time frame and with a better budgetary outcome.

It is interesting to note the comparison with the last 12 months of other capital budget issues. The government says that it is spending a record amount on capital works. After failing to spend a record amount on capital works, if the government does not do anything for long enough, the projects will accumulate. In the past 12 months \$700 million of the capital budget was not spent. So that has been rolled over to this year.

That signals another concern that I have in regard to the government's new-found self-proclaimed ability to be able to deliver the grunt factor to get the infrastructure built for this state. We have seen it with

water infrastructure, where it has done nothing for eight years. We have seen it with the energy industry, where the government took successive dividends out of that industry to the point at which it is collapsing. We have seen it with the gridlock on our roads. In fact, over a number of years under this government road spending as a proportion of capital works has dropped from about 24 per cent of the capital budget to about 14 per cent. Now this government has to try to ramp up that spending. Ultimately it is not very smart politics for the government to try to turn the ship around when it should never have turned the ship backwards in the first place.

We will certainly be pursuing not only the issue of better engagement with the private sector to deliver better outcomes for public infrastructure but also a more timely and cost-effective way of delivering infrastructure. This continual carryover of capital budget of the amounts that we have seen signifies only that this government has not changed its spots in regard to being able to deliver infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective way. The state coalition was in power in minority government for only two years but it was able to get the M1 constructed. The only major project that this government has achieved in eight years is Lang Park.

Time expired.