



Speech by

**Rachel Nolan**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

Hansard Tuesday, 6 March 2007

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## **RIVERLINK SHOPPING CENTRE, PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (12.26 pm): The Riverlink Shopping Centre development at North Ipswich is the most substantial development to have happened in central Ipswich since the now moribund Ipswich City Square opened 20 years ago. The development has the potential to reignite the centre of town. It also carries the risk that it could do substantial damage to the Ipswich CBD. For all of the six years that I have been in parliament the people of Ipswich—the retailers, the council and the state MPs—have considered the issue of finding the appropriate balance in that equation and the consensus reached has been that Riverlink can go ahead on the condition that it links—hence the name—with the existing CBD. The link is vital and the link is to be provided through a pedestrian bridge.

The Riverlink development received its final approval from council and subsequently the state government in mid-2004 and construction on the centre commenced soon afterwards. On 28 November 2006 I stood in this place and vocalised the concern held by many traders and residents that we had not yet seen any action on the bridge. Three months later I am disappointed to report to the House that, while the developers are making a lot of noise about opening their big box centre, today there continues to be no progress on the bridge. Indeed, the developer has argued in a letter to me, which I table for members, and in media reports, which I also table, that the bridge is being held up because of procrastination from government agencies—namely Queensland Rail and the EPA.

*Tabled paper:* Copy of a letter dated 29 November 2007 from Mr Allan Keast, Director of Leda Holdings Pty Ltd to Ms Nolan concerning the Ipswich Riverlink pedestrian bridge.

*Tabled paper:* Copy of an article from *The Queensland Times*, dated 28 February 2007, titled 'Riverlink may open without city link'.

Concerned about this allegation, I sought a full briefing from Queensland Rail. Is it true, I asked, that it is QR that is holding up the bridge? I want to share with the House just what it was that I found out. The advice that has come from QR is as follows. On 5 October 2006—that is when the shopping centre had been being built for two full years—QR said this—

Out of concern that QR was yet to receive engineering design and supporting details of the proposed pedestrian bridge, and with the scheduled opening of Riverlink rapidly approaching, QR on its own initiative convened a meeting of representatives from Ipswich City Council, Leda and QR engineers.

So when the centre had been being built for two years, QR on its initiative contacted Leda about the bridge. It continues—

30 October 2006

Leda's consultants submit engineering drawings to QR

1 November 2006

QR approves engineering drawings—

that is, QR having initiated this process then gave Leda a two-day turnaround on its engineering designs. It continues—

7 December 2006

Leda requests QR certification that existing bridge will support proposed bridge.

5 February 2007—

two months later—

QR locates original bridge design drawings—

from an 1893 bridge. That is, there was a two-month delay, but QR should be commended for having drawings from an 1893 bridge. The facts speak for themselves.

While since late 2004 Leda has rushed full steam ahead at the money-making task of building its shopping centre, QR's written advice establishes that it made no effort on the bridge until QR approached it in October 2006. In addition to falsely claiming that it cannot build the bridge because of QR's delay, Leda has claimed that it is building it off site—I do not quite know how it can have this both ways—for it to be lifted into place by a crane when it is ready. I do not know about the accuracy of that claim, but in order to end any uncertainty I invite Leda to prove the claim by taking local media in coming days to show them the bridge under construction. The photographs—or the absence of them—will allow Ipswich people to decide for themselves whether this claim is true.

Leda's claim that the government is holding up the construction of the bridge has about as much credibility as the position it put forward last year when, with its shopping centre clearly not completed, it claimed in a letter posted to many proposed tenants that it could not open because there were hold-ups from Main Roads and Energex. This company is not demonstrating goodwill to the people of Ipswich in relation to all of these matters. The development approval establishes a series of clear conditions: a bridge, some traffic lights, some landscaping. These conditions are important to the people of Ipswich, and I urge Leda to comply with those conditions—that is, to comply with the rule of law.