



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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MOTION: SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND REGIONAL PLAN

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (12.06 pm): I rise to speak, I promise very briefly, in this debate. I rise to respond primarily to the comments of the member for Beaudesert, who, while indicating the opposition's support for the regional plan—and we note that that support has been ongoing—seemed to oppose the notion that infrastructure costs should generally be borne by developers and those people who profit from the development of what was previously agricultural land in new and growing areas.

I was intrigued by that position. I think that is symptomatic of the opposition's approach to these matters. On the surface, we see support from the parties opposite for the regional plan all the way through, except in so much as we get speeches such as those from the member for Beaudesert that appear to question the principles which underlie the regional plan. We also had the opposition shadow spokesman—I think it was the member for Warrego at the time—during the last election campaign writing to developers implying that there would be changes to the regional plan if only some cash were to flow the National Party's way. I think that really says it all. The opposition supports this plan on the surface, but it does not think that developers should generally have to pay the infrastructure cost.

I am an enormous supporter of the regional plan and of the discipline of urban planning in general for environmental, economic and social reasons. The era of urban sprawl in south-east Queensland simply must end and it must end for a number of reasons. The first is that we now know that climate change exists. We know that we cannot have people commuting for an hour to an hour and a half to work every day. We know that that is damaging our environment. We also know that we have to have quite a high density of urban living—I think around 15 properties per hectare—if public transport is to work. If we continue to have urban sprawl, we will inevitably have houses scattered and people having to drive to work. That is something that obviously has a serious social cost.

In the longer term, however, we also know that world oil supplies will peak and begin to decline, something that will massively force up the cost of oil to the individual. That will mean that ordinary families who live in the outer suburbs, where there is no access to public transport, will find themselves each week with a massive fuel bill—a cost that they cannot possibly sustain. There has already been some very good work done by the Urban Research Institute at Griffith University which shows where the people who are vulnerable to higher petrol prices live. They are people who live in the outer suburbs on average incomes—that is, they have no choice but to drive to work and they have a large mortgage and fixed average incomes. For those people, a rise in the cost of oil would absolutely devastate the family budget. It would cause them to lose their houses.

What is being advocated by the member for Beaudesert with the continuation of the concept of urban sprawl is that we leave those people to their own devices. We leave them to continue pumping out greenhouse gases and ultimately to face the risk on their own of losing their houses because they can no longer afford to drive to work. That is what is being proposed when it is proposed to reject the discipline of urban planning. I think that is something that we as a government cannot accept.

Similarly, we cannot accept that it is reasonable to continue to pay for the roads, the railway lines, the water and the other infrastructure to prop up the short-term profits of the development industry. That is why there is a regional plan. So the reasons for having a regional plan include the effect on people's

household budgets in the face of the peak in oil prices. There are environmental reasons, particularly in light of climate change. There is a bunch of social evidence that says that people are happier when they live and work in a reasonably close space, when they do not drive an hour to work, which is what a rural residential development gives them. And it is unreasonable that the taxpayer should continue to bear the infrastructure cost of far-flung urban development.

The Howard government has just committed to spending \$2.3 billion on nine kilometres of road. The idea that we will continue to have urban sprawl 40 and 50 kilometres from the city and that we will continue to prop that up with taxpayer-funded roads is fundamentally irresponsible. For that reason, we must stick to the discipline of this regional plan; otherwise, we will leave both individuals and governments of the future with a massive and unsustainable cost to bear.