



Speech by

Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR ROBINA

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TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr STEVENS (Robina—Lib) (5.55 pm): I rise to support my coalition colleagues by contributing to this debate and speaking on the motion before the House on the deplorable state of public transport infrastructure in Queensland. My focus of course will be the neglect of the Gold Coast region that this Labor government has practised over 16 of the last 18 years it has been in office.

The Gold Coast region is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia and has been for the last 30 years. The Beattie-Bligh Labor government has mistreated the residents of the area to the point of desperation. Congestion on the Gold Coast is at an all-time high, and coming into the tourist season the influx of another 500,000 people over the coming months will only exacerbate this problem.

This is something that we on the Gold Coast have had to deal with each year for years, and the state government has just totally ignored this problem. The government has been encouraging people to come to Queensland but it has not provided for them in terms of suitable public transport infrastructure for the booming Gold Coast region. Growth on the Gold Coast has been powering for the last 30 years since Joh abolished death duties, yet the Labor Party keeps telling us that this is some new phenomenon that it has only just woken up to.

There is no bus service to the important booming industrial area in Yatala from the surrounding suburbs and back for the 8,000 workers who contribute to this thriving business area. The bus service to the Gold Coast hinterland is limited and sporadic, and forward thinking needs to be put into the development of the communities in the hinterland.

The application for the solar cat ferry project from Runaway Bay all the way through to Broadbeach has been undermined and financially hamstrung due to the six-knot requirement in certain parts of the waterways along proposed routes. This project, which was presented by a consortium headed by Labor icon Bob Hawke, has had the wind taken out of its sails by Labor government bureaucrats. The six-knot requirement for the project would be like a slow boat to China or catching a train doing 20 kilometres per hour from Brisbane to the Gold Coast. No-one would use it. The temerity of the government in undermining the project and not allowing an exemption from the six-knot requirement is inexcusable. Yet again this is another example of the government not planning for future public transport needs in the Gold Coast region. Research has shown there would be no safety or environmental issues, especially erosion of river banks, with the exemption of the six-knot provision. The research was also ignored by the state government.

The Gold Coast rapid transport system is another saga that has been on the backburner. This fiasco with the light rail system is dismal and has been on the drawing board for four years—very similar to the TransLink smart card debacle. The light rail system was initiated by the former mayor of the Gold Coast, Gary Baidon, and he has not been around for the last four years. The half a billion dollar project has been analysed, scrutinised, politicised and criticised and still no decision has been arrived at by the state government one way or another.

We cannot wait any longer for basic transport services. Even the duplication and extension of the rail system to Coolangatta will not be completed until 2026. Doesn't this government realise it will be too late by then? The Gold Coast will be a city of a million people by 2026. The economic growth on the Gold

Coast has generated enormous funds for the state government through stamp duty, gambling taxes and tourism dollars. The public transport infrastructure has not met the exponential growth of this region.

With the Gold Coast being the sixth largest city in Australia, there has been plenty of planning in the area of public transport infrastructure, but very little action. Let us look at the debacle on the on- and off-ramps of the M1. The member for Mudgeeraba would be well aware of the problems there. Despite increasing commuter usage, there has been no planning for growth and traffic is at a standstill at the roundabouts and exit and entry points. The upgrade of the motorway has been stalled through excuses and the buck passing of responsibility to other levels government. By the time it is delivered to Gold Coast motorists, it will simply be full up again.

In conclusion, I call on the state government to get its acts together and build a more efficient, commuter-friendly public transport infrastructure and road system, as is its duty as the elected representative of the people. It must stop ignoring the enormous growth on the Gold Coast, which will continue.