



Speech by

## Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

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### APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

**Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—NPA) (12.16 pm): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the estimates committee, and I will address the area of infrastructure. For too long the government has failed to plan for the future, as the member for Southern Downs outlined. For too long our infrastructure requirements and future needs, particularly in the north, have been ignored in favour of non-essential projects and initiatives. We have had footbridges instead of dams, we have had stadiums instead of hospital beds, and the past has finally caught up.

For the Burdekin electorate there are some very real needs, and I am pleased that some of these needs have at least been acknowledged in the government's economic triangle, but it is very relevant to note that the economic triangle mirrors the coalition's northern development policy. It was interesting that it was announced the day after we released the northern development policy. However, it is the delivery and not the rhetoric that is paramount.

The Bowen Basin coalfields form a major part of the wealth generation of Queensland and infrastructure is still desperately needed. The *Courier-Mail* yesterday stated that the Queensland coal industry is losing a billion dollars a year because of lack of infrastructure by the Queensland government. This is an appalling indictment on the government bearing in mind the huge coal royalties that the state rakes in every year. The recently released review in conjunction with the Queensland Resources Council that Mr Stephen O'Donnell, the former chief executive of Pacific National, led outlines some huge irregularities and needs in the area of infrastructure.

The report specifically reviewed the performance of the Goonyella coal chain. What it outlined in simplistic terms was that the current bottleneck in the system is the lack of rolling stock capacity. There are approximately two hours lost in each loaded coal run from the mine to Jilalan—this is every run. Every 30 minutes lost equates to more than two million tonnes per annum for the whole chain. Just consider the enormous loss to the industry that is currently happening. Every day is a loss of millions of dollars to the Queensland coal industry. Every minute is a loss. Rolling stock has been targeted as the major problem and Queensland Rail has to get its act into gear. I have been calling for the missing link through to Abbot Point since I came into the House. At last the government is acknowledging the need for the missing link, but putting the cost onto the coal companies is another example of the government's inadequacy.

Building this line is the responsibility of the government and it again shows the lack of support the government is giving to the valuable resource sector of Queensland. However, the strong message for the government from this review is that when the missing link is built—thanks to the coal companies—the same problem will exist on the Abbot Point line unless the rolling stock issue is addressed immediately. It is pleasing that stage 2 of the Abbot Point redevelopment is nearing completion and that a green light has been given by the Coordinator-General towards stage 3.

The minister for natural resources has frequently alluded to the need for a baseload power station in Collinsville, which has certainly been my aim and the aim of the coalition. But how many more committees and discussions does this need before this can be addressed? Bring on the action and not the rhetoric.

However, I also heard the minister say there is sufficient water in the Collinsville area. I dispute that assertion as the Moranbah pipeline bringing extra water to the Bowen Basin goes nowhere near Collinsville, and I have no doubt the Gattonvale offstream storage is insufficient.

The government's Blueprint for the Bush made a vague acknowledgement of the Urannah Dam. I put it to the minister that future development of the Bowen Basin depends on the building of the Urannah Dam. South-east Queensland is desperate for water but so is north Queensland.

I am still querying just what commitment the government has made to the Water for Bowen project and whether it really intends to build it. This scheme is desperately needed by Bowen farmers, it is desperately needed for the expansion of the Abbot Point port and it is also needed for the Bowen area to expand and grow. A commitment by the government to finally fund the stage 2 environmental impact study means nothing unless it gives a firm commitment to build the channel that we are still waiting for.

I noticed the member for Whitsunday's support for infrastructure in this area, but I was intrigued when she seemed to suggest that Abbot Point, Collinsville, Water for Bowen et cetera are within the Whitsunday electorate. I could offer her the same lesson in geography that the minister for natural resources had on where these areas are. Or perhaps the member for Whitsunday is pre-empting the redistribution, and that really is rather naughty. No matter how much she wishes that Abbot Point, the future industrial area, Collinsville and the Water for Bowen project were in her electorate, when I last looked they were entirely within the Burdekin area and I would be very happy to show her around. But I really welcome her support. I thank her for supporting my continued push, and I am sure she is just as frustrated as I am.

Time expired.