



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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QUEENSLAND RAIL, COAL INDUSTRY

Queensland Rail, Coal Industry

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.36 am): Queensland Rail has been named as the bottleneck in the Queensland coal chain, costing the industry \$1.2 billion in 2006-07. The coal basin is the engine room of Queensland's economy, and the government's crippling of this industry through lack of timely action has also cost our state its international reputation and is damaging our tax coffers, as \$1.2 billion equates to \$63 million of lost royalties to Queensland taxpayers. That means four new schools or 325 public housing dwellings robbed from the public purse.

Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal has just been upgraded to an exporting capability of 65 million tonnes, but the rail bottleneck will still be in place until 2011. So lost royalties could climb to several hundred million dollars over the next three to four years. That is a lot of schools and a lot of public housing. Queenslanders expect their government to deliver timely infrastructure to keep our engine rooms competitive. Yet this ongoing rail failure is damaging Queensland's reputation as a forward-thinking, competent state.

I welcomed the statement of the minister for transport this morning that the CoalConnect contract was finally signed yesterday to build the Goonyella to Abbot Point line, including the missing northern link rail line. But the EIS for this missing northern link was completed in August 2005. Why has the government sat on the project for 2½ years, costing this state billions of dollars in the meantime? All this government does is play catch-up after catch-up with its infrastructure announcements. It is time for a culture change to build timely infrastructure ahead of growth, ahead of demand, so that the crises which are foreseeable are avoided. It is time to see that Queenslanders do not have this cost inflicted upon them by an incompetent government.