



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.35 pm): Another day, another announcement about North Bank, a project which was announced years ago by the Labor Party as a vision for Brisbane and then turned into an apparition that would potentially flood this part of our beautiful city and intrude into the river. Now we have another announcement today, with new design options which one might say could well be a mirage rather than the vision the government is promoting.

The latest with North Bank—this never-ending story which is something like *Days of our Lives*—has a number of options, including removing the South East Freeway, a freeway which is a vital link into the middle of Brisbane. That solution from the government, which has repeatedly been bagging having a freeway in the city, is rather concerning. I take this opportunity, in light of this new information that the government has today released about North Bank and one of its options, to ask: will the government truly and sincerely rule out the stupidity of removing a vital arterial where we already have a city in gridlock?

The proposed North Bank project is just another example of how this government does business. It spends years doing nothing and then the cost of what it has to do is so much more expensive. It was revealed during the budget estimates that the North Bank design to date had cost taxpayers \$5 million, despite government assurances that the project would cost taxpayers nothing, and we still have not seen a final design to resolve this issue.

As I said, this is typical of how this government does business in regard to the planning and delivery of appropriate infrastructure. Poor scoping, contracting and cost control of major capital projects is threatening to roll back our projects which are needed to match Queensland's growth. As a result of this bad planning and management, the SEQIP document—which started out as a \$32.27 billion document and is now estimated by government at \$107 billion—is fast becoming an aspirational document rather than a robust operational tool. It should be noted that SEQIP is only the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and there is a need for a 20-year plan to clearly map out the capital investment required for the rest of the state. We as the state opposition support the concept of 20-year infrastructure plans. It is a good concept, but they have got to be robust, they have got to be well managed and they have got to actually deliver, rather than having projects which are blowing out to such extraordinary lengths that they threaten the viability of a number of other projects.

Thus, it is disappointing that the \$800 million blow-out on the \$2.5 billion western corridor recycled water pipeline—a blow-out which is equivalent in cost to 38 schools or 136 police stations—is glossed over by the government as an acceptable cost variation. This is despite this project's drought yield being revised down to only 140 megalitres a day. That 140 megalitres a day is about the same yield as the \$1.2 billion Gold Coast desalination plant—a desalination plant which is half the price of the western corridor pipeline. I applaud the engineering abilities of the pipeline's builders but question the cost control, contracting and poor strategic decision making of the government which has led to this unacceptable blow-out.

Airport Link provides one more case of government budgeting incompetence. Airport Link was reported at estimates to be \$3.4 billion. Premier Anna Bligh previously said that the state government's

contribution would only be \$47 million, but after the estimates process it was revealed that the state government's contribution had now risen to \$267 million.

I heard the minister say before, 'We didn't ask about this cost blow-out.' Well, he did not reveal it. He had a duty of disclosure to the people of Queensland. This government covered up a significant increase in taxpayer liability in regard to this project. This is after he lauded what a wonderful financial success their mechanisms for funding it were. This once again raises a question of whether they really know what they are doing in regard to appropriate scoping and costing of their projects.

Finally, I turn to Queensland's new convoluted water bureaucracy—a beast of unknown costs and destined to blow out even further than what Peter Beattie promised the Water Commission would cost. A few years ago the then Premier said that it would be \$2 million, and this year it will be a \$24.1 million bureaucracy.

Time expired.