



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Thursday, 28 August 2008

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (3.26 pm): The state Labor government has failed to commit to a true rapid transit scheme for the Gold Coast. Last week's announcement was another disappointing announcement because it raised more questions than answers. It neglected the majority of the Gold Coast by committing to only one small leg of a plan and then failing to answer the question as to when the other stages will occur. It is time that this Labor government released the business plan.

Mr REEVES: I rise to a point of order. Correct me if I am wrong, but I thought this announcement was after the estimates hearings.

Miss SIMPSON: This is debating the issue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! There is no point of order.

Miss SIMPSON: No business case has been released. I challenge this government to release the business case. Let us see the figures as to the relative merits of the various modes of transport, the benefits as well as the impact upon the community. The community has a right to know. They are vitally interested to see a sustainable service that does deliver for the whole of the Gold Coast. We have seen nothing of that. All we have seen from the government is another announcement about an announcement. We have seen no detail about how this \$1.67 billion project, if in fact that is going to be the cost, is going to occur across all stages. With all the studies that have been done, by this stage it should have been at a point to go to tender.

When I explained to the Deputy Premier that by this stage it should have been ready to go to tender, he criticised that. He should look at how many years the government has been announcing action in regard to this transit scheme. By this stage it should be out there starting these projects. But, no, we have another stepping stone in a process with no detail and no explanation as to when there will in fact be a service delivered for the Gold Coast. We do support the use of PPPs and being able to bring forward infrastructure to be able to deliver additional benefit to the community, but we have seen no detailed business case. It is of concern that for a project that is so significant to so many people we have once again seen only a press release from the minister.

I also want to discuss the issue of the state Labor government saying that it would fast-track the release of greenfield development sites on the Sunshine Coast. This announcement was made only two days after the state budget was tabled in this House, but the government did not announce any fast-tracking of infrastructure to match that. I have since had letters from the ministers when I questioned them about this and they have said, 'The transit systems will be in place.' But there will not be adequate transit systems in place to deal with the level of growth that they are trying to fast-track.

The CAMCOS and the public transport projects the government has for the Sunshine Coast are not due for completion until the 2025-26 financial year. That is too far out for the level of development the government is talking about. There is a need to bring forward this infrastructure so as not to cause gridlock in what will become high-density areas. One of those greenfield sites in the middle of Maroochydore engineers have told me has the ability to increase local traffic by up to 40 per cent. Those sites are not transit ready. They are not public transport ready, and they must be if the government is going to fast-track

this kind of density. It is fair enough for the community to question whether this density is sustainable without the infrastructure being put in place.

I also want to address the concerns of the CityRail commuters who face incredible congestion here in Brisbane and on connecting rail lines. We have been asking for the state government to release figures in relation to congestion, such as cancellation rates, and to be clean and honest about what has been going on. We lodged a freedom of information request last week after we had seen time and again the government's failure to answer questions in parliament. Lo and behold, it did release some figures but not all of the figures. The figures that were released by the government with regard to the Ipswich line show that 21 per cent of peak hour services are congested. On the Caboolture line it is 21 per cent; Nambour, 20 per cent; Ferny Grove, 18 per cent; Gold Coast, eight per cent; and Cleveland, four per cent. But when the government was asked to release the numbers of people actually using those trains, it has refused to do so.

Some of the public commuter advocacy groups have rightly asked why the government will not release those figures. The concern is that there have been reports of up to 1,300 people riding on trains that are designed to take only about 1,000 people. There is a genuine safety concern here. It is a concern for public safety as well as for people's comfort. If the state government will not release these figures we have to ask the question why. There must be an increase in the capacity to bring forward the rolling stock that is necessary to deal with some of the congestion issues. But we want to see honesty from the government because you cannot fix a problem unless you are honest about the extent of the problem, and we have not seen that from the government today.

Time expired.