



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 12 November 2008

MOTION: BEATTIE-BLIGH GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC RELATIONS

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.55 pm): I support the LNP motion before the House tonight. This government defends having 640 spin doctors, media and PR people working in the Queensland government. Almost one-fifth of all Beattie-Bligh spin doctors are employed to weave their stories on transport issues while commuters continue to suffer from increased congestion on our roads and in our trains, and it is getting worse. Main Roads, Queensland Transport and Queensland Rail have a combined total of 148.4 employees in media communications, marketing and public affairs working to gloss over 10 years of neglect under the Beattie-Bligh government. People expect better roads and transport services, not more and more spin from this government.

Transport issues have one of the highest amounts of dedicated spin staff, but it is still not enough to hide the neglect this Labor government has shown to Queensland's roads and public transport systems. No matter how much spin it produces, it cannot hide the fact that people are sitting in traffic longer, they are crammed into trains and are unable to find car parks at bus and train stations—if their community has these services at all! Despite the spin doctors, the go card is still charging people for trips they never made or daily dishing out free bus trips because the system keeps failing to work. Spin doctors got busy trying to slap the Bligh government on the back for completing the Tugun bypass, but they could not disguise the fact that it was nearly 10 years overdue and blew out by 675 per cent. When one scratches the surface of the gloss that the spin doctors try to paint over this government, we find out about the other blow-outs and the lack of attention to the real areas of service delivery that the people of Queensland want. Under the watch of this government, the Bundaberg ring-road blew out by 119 per cent; the Mackay Hospital bridge has blown out by 53 per cent; the south-west arterial road by 205 per cent; and the widening of the Capricorn Highway by 44 per cent, just to name a few.

People do not want to see the slippery words of a minister trying to get out of a jam glossed over with another brochure or expensive colour ads in newspapers paid for by taxpayers. They just want better services. They want to see their roads fixed. They want to see safe intersections. They want safety around school zones. They want more trains, buses and park and rides. People in regional Queensland want to see more QR freight services to reduce the number of heavy vehicles on the roads. They want to see more truck stops and safer roads. The Beattie-Bligh Labor government can keep spinning until it is blue in the face, but Queenslanders just want these problems fixed. The LNP believes that, while Queensland motorists, commuters and freight carriers are suffering with congestion and unsafe conditions on the roads, their state government has a duty to resource solutions before spin. The LNP will direct public servants towards improving front-line services to provide more doctors, nurses, teachers and police officers—to provide front-line service delivery and to see these people appropriately supported. This Labor government exists to provide spin, not service. We believe it should be the other way around.

Clearly, the Beattie-Bligh Labor government is unable to get its priorities right. Main Roads has 63.4 media staff, Queensland Transport has 41 and QR has 44. QR's media staff is more than double the number of those of the next largest government owned corporation and represents about one-third of all government owned corporation PR staff. This is at a time when more than 21 per cent of the services on the Ipswich rail line are overcrowded and 20 per cent of the services on the north coast rail line are

overcrowded. This is at a time when we see this government about to spend more than \$1 million on trying to relaunch the go card. It could have saved that money if it got the services right in the first place. That is why we believe that the focus must be on service delivery first. Then you have a good story to tell. But 640 staff to sell the story of this government that has failed to deliver services is the wrong priority.