



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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### MOTION: ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (3.01 pm): Premier Bligh and the Labor Party have lived in the land of fairy tales—a land of milk and honey where they never planned for the tough times because they thought the boom times would never end. But alas the tough times are here and Queensland Labor has no plan. Premier Bligh could be likened to the story of Old Mother Hubbard. It goes like this: ‘Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to give Queenslanders a crust. When she got there the cupboard was bare, so she rang Kevin because Queensland was bust.’ That is not an economic plan, Premier Anna; that is the script for cargo culters. Queenslanders deserve better than Old Mother Hubbard style economic plans from the Labor Party.

Queensland families who are worrying about their jobs need a government which is steady, shows leadership and prepares for the future, and that is what the LNP is determined to do. Queensland Labor could not spend the money wisely in the boom times, so how on earth could it spend it wisely in the tough times? People are rightly asking where their money has gone. Where has the money from the mining royalties, the GST, the stamp duties, and the rivers of increased taxation under this government been spent? Labor has built the gravy trains of self-opportunity, helping out its mates who get up to \$500,000 in success fees working on government contracts but not on infrastructure which would have meant that people crowded like sardines into the state’s overcrowded trains would not be riding in discomfort. Labor has not built the infrastructure which is needed to ensure that when parents take their sick children to hospital they do not languish in the emergency department for hours and hours and even days on end. Labor has not built the infrastructure which would have ensured that our state schools—which we heard the education minister talk about—are not so dilapidated. We have seen now state Labor discovering there is a problem with the rundown state infrastructure, trying to blame somebody else and now wanting to take the money from somewhere else.

After the boom times in Queensland everybody wants to know where the money has gone. It has gone in mismanagement and lost opportunity. Queensland Labor wracked up \$65 billion worth of debt with no repayment plan. As we have always said, there is an appropriate place for responsible use of debt in regard to building this state, but it must be on the basis that you are able to repay the debt. Labor’s repayment plan is to gouge business, jobs and households. It has whacked up the price of registration, it is putting up water bills, it has certainly whacked up electricity bills—and the list goes on.

Is it not an irony that federal Labor promised to be economic conservatives? Premier Anna Bligh does not even pretend to be an economic conservative. She is an economic cargo culter. In regard to how the money has been spent, I have heard this government boasting about infrastructure spend. The reason why in the budget the infrastructure spend has grown from an aspirational document in the SEQIPP to what it is today is that it has not spent; it has accumulated and rolled over projects until the price of those projects has escalated.

Let us have a look at the water grid. As Lawrence Springborg, the Leader of the Opposition, outlined, we advocated for a recycled water pipeline more than eight years ago and this government laughed it off. In fact, it ensured that it did not happen in that time frame. Then, when it left it too late in

regard to responsible planning of water infrastructure in this state, it threw money at a project that was so badly scoped it blew out by more than \$800 million. That would have painted a lot of schools. That would have provided a lot of school libraries, a lot of road and hospital infrastructure to communities throughout this state. But, no, Labor does not know how to spend wisely the money that it receives from taxpayers. That one project alone accumulatively represents hundreds of schools, hundreds of lost opportunities in regard to building infrastructure that would have built the economic capacity of this state. It does not matter how much money we give to Labor; it just does not spend it wisely.

That is why we are saying that with the money this state receives—be it from Queensland taxpayers or from the federal government reallocating the funds that have been set aside by the previous conservative government—it is time for responsible delivery of infrastructure and responsible delivery of services.

What an irony that we have also heard this government talking about how it has discovered it has a red-tape problem. Now the government is going to cut through the red tape so that projects will flow. Well, how long has it been in government? Eleven years and it has only just discovered it has a red-tape problem. I suspect an election is coming and Labor has decided it better look like it is actually doing something. This tired old state Labor government is in a hurry to get ready for an election, swearing hand on heart that it is going to be different next time.

The infrastructure minister, Paul Lucas, has become a one-man bottleneck to progressing infrastructure projects in Queensland, and that is saying something. Despite Labor's recent rhetoric of fast-tracking projects with no bureaucratic hurdles and no red tape, Mr Lucas's infrastructure department has been again running behind schedule on major projects. Both the Gold Coast marine development project and the Whitsunday regional airport redevelopment are a couple of projects that are significantly behind the announced schedules. Labor's delay is stalling new jobs and frustrating businesses involved in projects.

We know about the rail projects that companies were geared up for, were ready to roll with and ready to go with, because they had been told to get ready, the tenders were going to market, and then they were pulled on the north coast line. That picture is repeated throughout the state. We know about the police academy. People were told to get ready to tender. They had their teams in place, and then at the last moment those projects were pulled. There is a whole list of them.

I am going to table a very good research paper from the Civil Contractors Federation that outlines a number of issues and requests in regard to assistance to ensure that the whole of the industry and the whole of Queensland shares in infrastructure programs as they are rolled out and which also addresses the importance of traineeships and apprenticeships to maintain skills in the industry. The federation makes the point that in the public infrastructure market for projects totalling less than \$30 million it has endured an extremely competitive market for the last 12 to 18 months, with many projects attracting over eight to 10 tenders. Members have also noted that fewer projects are occurring in this market.

There are a number of reasons why the state government stands to blame for that. Firstly, in regard to forced council amalgamations, a lot of councils have been so consumed over the amalgamation process that their funds have gone into the merger process, and there is concern that has meant there is less money available for some of the small market projects, and local government needs assistance in that area. Because the state government has blown its budget so badly in the large projects, a number of smaller projects under \$30 million have been pulled off the table or, in the euphemism of this government, 'resequenced' off the program. That has been repeated time and time again.

The SEQIPP document is now a joke. It is now regarded as an aspirational document rather than what it should be, that is, an operational document. Industry should be able to go to a business wanting to put on apprentices and trainees and ensure they have a pipeline of works and some certainty about when the work is going to start. That is what SEQIPP should be. That is what the rolling infrastructure programs of the state should be. That is not what is happening. That is what industry has been saying to me. I table the document I have referred to.

*Tabled paper:* Document titled 'The Effect of global economic conditions on the Queensland civil construction industry: industry snapshot' by the Civil Contractors Federation, dated January 2009 [\[5110\]](#).

For this government to suddenly discover it has a problem with the rollout of projects and to discover that there is red tape is not just an irony but also hypocrisy. It has been told this for some time. It has this ad hoc way of bringing projects to market. It is a pity that it was not as efficient with the delivery of infrastructure as it is with recycling its press releases in the market.

It seems that this government is better at its hype and it is better at its rapid-response blogging than it is at making a rapid response to infrastructure delivery and ensuring security of real jobs shared across the state and shared across industry and delivered with maximum benefit for taxpayers rather than with maximum benefit for its mates in the Labor Party.