



Speech by

**Fiona Simpson**

**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

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## **APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D**

**Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (7.55 pm): I would like to thank the staff and also acknowledge my fellow colleagues on the committee for their assistance in this process and our chairman—although, of course, I am going to disagree with her comments regarding the time set aside for the hearing. With major portfolios such as those that were examined at this hearing, what needs to occur is for a whole day to be set aside. The way in which the motions are put to this House means that there is not enough time to address very serious issues. I will be raising that issue also in regard to the Transport portfolio. These are major portfolios where, on average, you would get to ask only 16 to 20 questions a day. They should not be bundled up with other major portfolios that also require significant attention.

I will address the Main Roads portfolio. A major restructure has been put in place, or is still on the way, in regard to the Department of Transport and Main Roads. We agree with bringing these two very important departments together. Where we have had concerns—and I was asking questions about this in the estimates process—was in relation to the costs of this process and there were no adequate answers given about what was going to be done to address staffing concerns. We had two different departments with two different enterprise bargaining agreements and, essentially, people doing similar jobs in a number of roles and not receiving the same pay. Those issues still have not been resolved and they are causing a lot of concern and stress in the department. It was disappointing that there were not adequate explanations from the minister about these very issues.

I believe that the Auditor-General's report goes to the heart of the problems that we have seen with Main Roads and, certainly with Transport. It is about a lack of leadership. Structure is important, but essentially leadership is more important to ensuring that programs stay on track, that there is a timeliness and a good scoping of projects and that forward planning is undertaken so that there is not a need for a crisis infrastructure program that ends up costing too much and has major cost blow-outs. It is significant that, with the merger of these two departments, we still do not see a clear line of responsibility between the ministers. In fact, there is a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities, with a third minister involved in the mix and that is the infrastructure minister—Transport, Main Roads and Infrastructure. Ministers were unable to answer questions about their lines of shared responsibilities. Certainly, that is a leadership issue that will not be resolved by this merger, because of the way in which this government has chosen to put these ministers in charge of one department.

I want to address the issue of tolling on our roads. I asked the minister about distance based tolling. People might ask, 'What is distance based tolling?' It is the ability to put tolling gantries into places where you currently do not have tolls. This government is advanced in its process of looking at putting gantries at the entries and exits of the motorways that currently do not have tolls in place. I find it astounding that, when he was asked where this process was at, the minister would not answer this issue in a straight way. Yet it is well known within the public sector that the government is advanced at looking at new tolls on vast sections of motorways where people are currently not tolled.

Is that about congestion management, as he tried to say when he said, 'We might be looking at other tolling options'? No, it is about bulking up the value that the government will receive for an asset that

it is about to flog off. The Gateway Motorway and the Logan Motorway have a heavy debt attached to them and the government is certainly looking at ways that it can improve its income stream. It should come clean with people; it should stop misleading the public and tell them just what those plans are, because it is going to cost motorists a lot more.

I want to also address the issues of the cost blow-outs in this state government's program. One project alone, the Ipswich Motorway, has blown out by nearly \$900 million. That is funding that is not available for other roads right throughout Queensland, particularly in rural and regional Queensland where people are dying on roads and where coroners' reports are now saying that the roads are the problem. This government has not made that a priority and yet it continues to badly scope projects that then suck the guts out of the remaining projects that should have a timely process of project delivery. This government is not planning ahead. It is still in a process of crisis management which is dearly costing this department and the program that needs to be rolled out.

*(Time expired)*