



Speech by

**Mike Horan**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

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## **APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (5.13 pm): I want to speak about three matters that were referred to at the Estimates Committee C hearing—the issue of the water pipeline from Wivenhoe Dam to Toowoomba, the missing link of the Wondoan-Banana railway line and the Toowoomba bypass with reference to the Building Australia Fund.

Toowoomba has a social blight that no other Australian city has. We have around 4,000 B-doubles a day going through the main east-west road of our city and through 16 sets of traffic lights. People have to see the deterioration of the road to understand it. We have deaths, injuries, blockages and closures on this highway. These trucks can be carrying cattle or about 10,000 tonnes of grain a day. That amounts to hundreds of trucks a day to carry the grain. They are carrying coal to Swanbank to keep the lights on in South-East Queensland. They are carrying coal and grain down to the Brisbane port. In fact, approximately 70 per cent of what goes across to the Brisbane port for export goes through the main highway of Toowoomba.

No other city in Australia should have to endure what this city endures—almost total blockages and closures at certain times of the day. It is particularly so in the late afternoon. People are almost unable to get into schools, into service stations and into businesses along that road. It has to be seen in the late afternoon to be believed.

Some \$700 million was put aside for this in the last Howard government budget and the Rudd government cancelled it. I have asked questions about this in parliament for many years. The latest answers coming from the Minister for Infrastructure, who is in the chamber at the moment, is that the government is writing to the federal government or lobbying for the money and all the rest of it.

We will not get that road unless the minister is prepared to make it the No. 1 priority. Unless it is made the No. 1 priority every time money comes to this state, no matter how important this bypass is—it is the most important road in Australia that carries all the freight from South-East Queensland to the southern states and to the Northern Territory; it is very important to economy of this nation—it just gets overridden by another ring-road or something or other for the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast or the city or wherever. It is about time the regions that provide the wealth, that provide the jobs, that sustain our economy and that are the conduit for the wealth of South-West Queensland and Western Queensland that comes through to South-East Queensland are recognised.

There was a recent council petition on this which had 25,774 signatures. It is time that we recognised where our wealth comes from. It is indecent to continue to foist on a city like Toowoomba this sort of road pressure that we are enduring at the moment. It is going to get worse because the cattle trains are no longer able to carry the cattle from out west. More and more B-doubles carrying cattle are coming through Toowoomba to go to the Dinmore, Beenleigh and Brisbane meatworks. More and more grain is coming through Toowoomba because of the last three bumper seasons. More and more coal is coming through.

I asked a question about Camby Downs. It is going to be online by 2010 and producing coal. The minister says that that coal is going to be carried by train. They cannot carry the coal from Acland by train. Some 60 per cent or more of that Acland coal is coming through the city. It is about to double its production. How many more hundreds of thousands of B-doubles that will have to come through the city are going to be needed for not only the Acland coal but also the Camby Downs coal? The Camby Downs coal cannot be taken through to Gladstone because the missing link is no longer there.

Finally, I mention the water pipeline. The rest of South-East Queensland has had water grids. There are water grids up to the north coast and down to the south coast and all over the place. Yet the Toowoomba Regional Council has to pay a contribution of \$112 million towards the total cost of \$1.87 billion for the pipeline from Wivenhoe Dam to our system.

We just never seem to get our share of the money. All the other places in South-East Queensland and the rest of Queensland get it. It has meant that the access fee for Toowoomba residents has doubled in the latest lot of council rates. There are massive increases in rate costs. The cost of a unit of water is up to \$1.50. Everyone is paying through the nose. South-East Queensland gets the stuff free. Our regional council has to pay for that infrastructure.

We sit on top of a mountain. The water has to be lifted around 700 to 800 metres vertically. It is a very special case. One would think we could get something for that. What has the government done? It has taken \$6.5 million in normal state government grants out of the council budget. That has added to and exacerbated this unbelievable impost put on the people of Toowoomba because of the drought and because we have to access a pipeline. Everyone else in South-East Queensland gets the pipelines and it does not cost their council anything. It is put in place. We have to pay. It is about time Queensland got a fair dinkum go from this state Labor government which continues to neglect our city.