



Speech by
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (8.33 pm): I rise tonight to contribute to the outcome of Estimates Committee D, in particular the department of main roads. Where do I start? Unfortunately, there is much to outline of the roads in my electorate, both the M1 and many rural roads. Yes, they have received some funding. However, these amounts do not allow for the appropriate upgrades and required maintenance work to be undertaken.

The Nerang South interchange exit 73 upgrade was first proposed in 2002. Here we are seven years down the track and it is still yet to be completed. This is despite their big brother, the Rudd federal government, allocating \$22.5 million in April this year to make sure this vital project is completed by the middle of the year. I call on the Minister for Main Roads to check his calendar. The middle of the year has come and gone. Local residents have had to put up with roadworks on this interchange since 2004. Can the minister guarantee when this upgrade will finally be completed?

We also saw last month work beginning on the construction of the 80 million Varsity Lakes interchange exit 85. This upgrade is supposed to be completed in 2011. How can this interchange upgrade be completed in two years when exit 23 has taken seven, not to mention the budget blow-out on exit 73 of over \$7 million? How are Gold Coast residents expected to take seriously the word of this Bligh government? There are delays in work being started, delays in works being finished and budget blow-outs.

As a cherry on top for the M1, in December 2008 joint funding of \$158 million was announced by Premier Bligh and her banker, federal minister for infrastructure, Anthony Albanese, to fast-track the widening of the very dangerous section of the M1 between Nerang and Worongary. When this was announced, there was much excitement from residents, as this stretch of the M1 is heavily congested. Motorists thought that perhaps their daily travel through the Mudgeeraba car park could be at an end.

A couple of months went by and there was no more word on when this fast-track would commence. A state election came and went and still no word. It was not until last month that the Minister for Main Roads, Craig Wallace, issued a press release announcing these works would commence early next year. What a joke. What an absolute farce. Tenders are not even being called for this project until the fourth quarter of this year. Even when the builder is selected, early next year means what—anywhere from January to June? And this is fast-tracked. Again this government is treating Gold Coast residents with contempt.

On behalf of residents I urge the Minister for Main Roads to commit to installing safety barriers on the M1 between Nerang and Mudgeeraba. This is the only section of the M1 on the Gold Coast that does not have safety barriers. You cannot ignore the statistics of crashes and fatalities. Action is needed now, not in two, four or seven years time when this upgrade is finally completed. I would again urge the Minister for Main Roads to make sure that these barriers are installed before another young Gold Coaster is killed such as my friend's daughter six weeks ago.

Rural roads in my electorate have also been neglected. In 2008 the RACQ named Beechmont Road as the worst state main road—something the residents of Lower Beechmont and Beechmont are well aware of and about which they lobbied the previous member for Mudgeeraba on numerous occasions. Almost on queue, this government pledged prior to the last election \$2.5 million to upgrade Beechmont Road even though the LNP pledged \$5 million, which is what is required. Let's be realistic, shall we? This amount is well short of what is needed to properly upgrade this most dangerous road. It does not need pothole repairs. There are sections of road that need to be completely shaved back, realigned and resurfaced. I put the minister on notice that I, together with the members of the Better Roads for Beechmont Committee, will continue to be loud and vocal to make sure that this road is upgraded to ensure the safety of local residents and children to prevent further fatalities.

I have not even got around to mentioning Springbrook Road and Worongary Road, which has no funding allocated to it for the next five to 10 years. An article in the *Courier-Mail* last month highlighted the cost and impact on the state's economy as a result of road crashes. Last year alone the economic fallout and cost to communities was \$653 million for fatalities and injuries, and apparently that was a good year. What will the cost to communities, local mums and dads be for this year as a result of the disrepair and neglect of our state roads?