



Speech by

**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

Hansard Wednesday, 4 August 2010

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (5.17 pm): I have noted with interest the budget debates and the report of Estimates Committee C as it pertains to public transport. I have previously made my views on public transport very clear. In short, I am a huge fan. I am a fan for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Malcolm Turnbull recently identified in his speech to the National Population Summit, public transport infrastructure is actually a key ingredient in the population debate. There cannot be sustainable population growth without significant, staged, structured investment in public transport infrastructure. But as Mr Turnbull continues, there are other benefits to public transport—

Good public transport has an important social benefit. I am a passionate believer in mass transit and public transport because the reality is that cities, dare I add regions, that are wholly dependant on motor cars discriminate against the old, the poor and the young.

Mr Turnbull goes on to say—

Furthermore while technology can enable us to enjoy virtual proximity to each other, it is physical proximity, the ability to move around to meet each other, to go to places of public recreation, culture and commerce, that is essential to a city and above all to its social equity.

I agree entirely with Mr Turnbull. This is why I monitor the budget papers and debates with increasing interest when it comes to public transport investment—and, to be honest, with increasing alarm. I say 'alarm' because some key elements of a significant, staged and structured investment program for public transport have clearly gone missing. Yes, the Bligh Labor government is investing, some would say significantly, in public transport. But the Bligh Labor government can no longer claim to have a staged and structured approach. Let me give members an example. I have studied at length the budget papers; there is no mention of Redcliffe rail. In the *Hansard* of Estimates Committee C there is no mention of Redcliffe rail, yet even the member for Redcliffe herself was a member of that committee.

In the Bligh government's recently released glossy, the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program 2010-31, there is one vague reference to the benefits of the project. There are no dollars and no time frames for it in the government's latest plan for infrastructure development in South-East Queensland. Before those opposite howl with derision that I am opposed to the Redcliffe rail project, let me be clear: I am not. I am in full support of it. In fact, as a former high school student from the peninsula, I would have loved to have seen it in place sooner. What I am alarmed at is the almost magical way the funding for the project can be plucked from thin air. There is no mention of it in the budget or at estimates, but perhaps most tellingly there is only one vague mention of it in the latest edition of SEQIPP.

In my electorate of Glass House the question being asked is: while funding can be found for the Redcliffe rail project, why are the Bligh government's own published, staged and structured plans for the Caboolture to Nambour rail duplication being delayed and delayed again? This is not about funding; this is about planning. It is about sequencing and it is about staying true to publicly released budget and planning papers. Every year that the Nambour rail duplication project is delayed, railway towns up and down the electorate of Glass House grow more and more frustrated. For instance, while we wait for the rail upgrade we cannot address traffic issues through the Palmwoods town centre. We cannot develop and deliver

improved commercial opportunities for businesses and locals. Council cannot, with confidence, sign off on residential developments. In short, the town is held hostage, awaiting release that will only come when the upgrade is complete. Some will say that the technical aspects of the rail project are finalised and this should give certainty to council and the community regarding their plans. I respond by saying that we can have all the maps and technical drawings we like, but until the existing rail line is physically removed, shifted or replaced we can deliver none of the solutions I mentioned previously. It is simply not good enough. I know that there is little if any money left in the bank—the Bligh government has made sure of that—but what money is left should be directed to the projects that have been identified and publicly circulated. If not, it makes a mockery of this government's planning attempts.

In the time remaining I will touch on one other transport issue of concern to residents in the electorate of Glass House and, specifically, residents of Elimbah. Unfortunately, once again the Bligh Labor government has abdicated its responsibilities and the Moreton Bay Regional Council, through Councillor Adrian Raedel, has had to step up to the plate and fund the bill for urgent improvements to the Beerburum road pedestrian crossing outside Elimbah State School. Thanks to Councillor Raedel, the students will get a safer crossing, but thanks to the Bligh Labor government those same students will be relying on volunteer crossing supervisors because this government cannot find \$15,000 to fund this much needed position. The Department of Transport and Main Roads has identified it as a priority and the council has done its part. I call on the minister to delay no longer in allocating \$15,000 for the sake of the lives of Elimbah's students.