



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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CALOUNDRA AIRPORT

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (7.16 pm): What we have seen under this government is a lack of leadership in regard to regional aviation policy. In 2014 the leases on Caloundra Airport are due to expire. It is at least two years since this government was supposed to have made a decision to release the plans on what it intends to do to replace that airport. The government has not announced that, yet it is intending to sell off this airport and see it redeveloped for housing.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Ms SIMPSON: I heard that interjection from the other side, when a government member just said, 'Hear, hear!' in response to my comment that the government intends to sell the land off for housing. What is this government doing? It is selling the assets of Queensland. It is pushing populations into areas and not putting in place the necessary infrastructure to sustain that population growth. Here we see an example of one failed decision-making process that impacts across the whole region.

The Sunshine Coast Airport now finds that there is a proposed desalination plant under the flight path of approaching aircraft. What we see is a lack of coordination in the way that this government does business. It is based upon a lack of proper forward planning and a lack of protection of the necessary infrastructure, particularly in this case in regard to aviation.

There has been no decision on the Caloundra Airport. People and businesses have been left in limbo. They are unable to make investment decisions. They do not know whether they should look at other places. They are unable to get clarity from the government, which has broken its promise that it would make a decision about that airport and in relation to the investigation of an alternative airport south of Caloundra.

At the last election, the LNP made it quite clear that we believe it is important to keep the Caloundra Airport in lieu of an alternative location. This government has sat on its reports in regard to the alternative location south of Caloundra. I predict that the government does not want to make a decision to push it down into that area. The government just wants to close this airport and force all the general aviation back to the Sunshine Coast Airport. That is a mistake, and it is a mistake to start taking away from general aviation not only in South-East Queensland but also in the rest of Queensland. That is not a vision for the future. It is costing jobs today as people find they have no certainty from the decision making and the word of this government.

I will address the issue of putting a desalination path under the flight path of approaching aircraft and how the government has tried to manoeuvre its plans around that. We have not yet seen any detailed report, other than a very cursory report in regard to how the government will get around that. What we have seen are knee-jerk reactions from this government that are not about planning for the future and delivering infrastructure in a timely way for today. If the government is going to compromise the safety and the future investment of aviation, it should come clean and release its plans. Not announcing its decisions is not about government. We need to see the plans that it has undertaken in regard to the new airfields, and I think we will see that it has decided to close the Caloundra Airport and not replace it.