



Speech by

## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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### SHIPPING INDUSTRY; CAIRNS, HIGHWAY UPGRADE

**Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.52 am): Shipping is the lifeblood of our export based economy. The Great Barrier Reef is one of the natural wonders of the world. This is a delicate balance and it must be managed by the Queensland government. A week ago we saw the *Shen Neng 1* coal ship run aground on the Great Barrier Reef off Gladstone and spill oil.

This grounding has raised some major questions about the management and scrutiny of shipping by the Labor government. Why are ships rat-running through our reef? The government knew this was a problem but did nothing until a crisis occurred and then it announced a review. Where is the surveillance of ships particularly on the southern end of the reef? Why is the Maritime Safety Queensland strategic plan two years out of date having expired in 2008? Where is the contingency planning for major incidents in the waters around Queensland? Why have the government and the minister not acted on any of these questions?

Gladstone is already a major coal port and will soon be one of the biggest gas terminals in Australia. The number of ships travelling in this sensitive area will surge as our resources industry continues to boom. The public, Queenslanders, are rightly asking: why has this government not reinvested some of the royalties into better surveillance and enforcement of ships travelling along the Great Barrier Reef? This is the government that sent Queensland bust in a boom. This is the government that 12 months ago presided over an oil spill in Moreton Bay. It was found that it did not have a plan for a major oil spill. Maritime Safety Queensland, which is supposed to be the lead agency to deal with these issues, was thrown into a state of confusion when the Premier declared a disaster. The reports outline that there was confusion as to who was in charge during the early days of that incident. They were not prepared.

This latest incident occurred in federal waters, but the ship also passed through state waters. There is combined jurisdiction over elements of the Great Barrier Reef. The state is responsible for the area close to the shore and the federal government is responsible for the area further out. It stands to reason that this is a state government that has not taken its responsibility seriously by ensuring that there is proper investment in preventing these incidents and that there are plans in place to deal with these incidents if they occur.

I want to turn to another issue in North Queensland. I refer to the Cairns highway upgrade. We support the need for improved infrastructure and roads in this vital area. The first stage of the Cairns highway upgrade is necessary but there needs to be major adjustments to lessen the impact on the local community, businesses and residents and to make sure there is continued community cohesion and that the community is not divided. We have raised concerns about the plans for the first stage and have taken them up with the department. I understand that the first stage is being amended but we are still waiting to see the final detail. It is important when upgrading roads that the work is undertaken with the least impact on people's houses, businesses and lives.

The subsequent stages are the ones that are having an amazingly detrimental impact upon people. These upgrades will not occur for many, many years. There is no defined time frame as to when they are to occur and yet their impact is already being felt by hundreds of people today. They are in a great deal of

distress. The level of impact from the subsequent stages that have been outlined in the planning documents is something we must draw to the attention of the House.

There has been a call for alternative access into Cairns to be investigated. The old plans are out of date. We support a feasibility study into alternative access into Cairns to remove the uncertainty currently being experienced by those people living in the area of the proposed upgrade route further out from Cairns and those people living in other areas who are wondering where any alternative route may be. Any alternative route must not have a major impact upon houses. Consideration must be given to its impact upon the environment and to ameliorating any such impact.

It is important for the future of this region that it has certainty. It does not deserve to have that number of people currently in a great deal of distress because of the way this government has handled this process. Cairns is doing it tough enough now. It has one of the worst unemployment rates in Queensland, which is translated into jobs on the ground disappearing. The government's handling of the Cairns highway upgrade consultation has threatened further jobs and people's lifestyle.