



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Thursday, 5 August 2010

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.45 am): I wish to speak specifically to the portfolio of Main Roads. Our concern has been that this budget has actually cut Main Roads funding. It has been extraordinary to hear the Main Roads minister talking in the House this week as if the government had increased the Main Roads budget when there has been a quarter of a billion dollar cut to the Main Roads budget for Queensland. That deserves an explanation, and the minister really could not explain why the government has cut that budget at a time when it is taking record taxes off motorists here in Queensland.

In fact, Queensland motorists are now some of the heaviest taxed in Australia. They are facing huge costs. They are copping a \$500 million petrol tax bill, thanks to another broken Labor promise. Do members remember that before the last state election Premier Bligh and her colleagues said they were not going to get rid of the fuel tax rebate and that Queensland would remain a fuel tax free state? But, no, the government broke its promise and now motorists are being slugged in so many ways. In addition to that broken promise, the government has also increased taxes on motorists, with increases in the cost of registration and tolls. The toll increases are really hurting.

There is a message here for the government: listen to the people of Queensland. They are hurting with the debt, the waste and the exorbitant taxes which are over and above CPI which this Labor government has brought into Queensland. Is the government delivering more road funding? No. In fact, it has slashed the road budget here in Queensland. Queenslanders are not getting value for money.

Talking about value for money—and this issue should not be swept under the carpet by the Labor members who think these issues are petty—it is very concerning that the government has no rigorous process of assessing those items that are put into SEQIPP and their costings. The P rating structure might sound unusual to those who are not interested in the proper scoping of projects, but this is about the possibility of cost blow-outs and the maturity of projects that are listed in SEQIPP.

When I asked the Main Roads minister how many projects had actually been rated under this recognised system, he could not answer that question. He could not answer how many of the Main Roads projects that were in SEQIPP had gone through this rating system. That is a major concern because we want to ensure that there is value for money and that these projects have received the proper planning and scoping so there are no unforeseen increases in future budgets because that work has not been done. It is damnable that that work has not been done for projects that have been advanced from Main Roads and, it appears, from other major infrastructure portfolios into the SEQIPP process.

When the cost of the Ipswich Motorway blew out by \$800 million more than the original estimate, this government tried to brush it off as not being of significance, but that cost blow-out is equivalent to at least 2,000 kilometres of rural and regional roads. In other words, it is money that is not available for other projects. We want to make sure that these priority projects are built and that they are well scoped. We do not want other projects to pay the price because this government cannot manage money.

I want to address the issue of maintenance. Yes, we were critical of the fact that performance indicators have disappeared from the budget papers. In fact, what has disappeared from the budget papers is a future reference to what will be allocated for maintenance funding in Queensland. You would think this is fundamental and that an outline of the future allocation for maintenance on roads should be in the budget papers.

We want to not only see new roads built but also see them properly maintained. This performance measure has been wiped from the budget papers. The minister could not even explain properly what this meant. We are concerned that there needs to be accountability, otherwise more debt, waste and increased taxes will continue under the Labor Party. It is time that there was accountability and a transparent approach to how funding is being spent. Maintenance, as a critical part of that expenditure, deserves to be properly recognised in the budget papers. How the government is performing in regard to the rollout of that funding also needs to be properly recognised. Queenslanders deserve better value for money for the taxes that they are paying. They do not deserve to be gouged the way they are by this government. When the minister was asked basic questions about some of these allocations, he was unable to explain.