



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 10 February 2010

MOTION: SALE OF PUBLIC ASSETS; CALL FOR PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (6.04 pm): It is a bit rich hearing the transport minister claiming that this is all a good idea and that she is all behind it, when on 21 May she claimed in this House that Queensland Rail was not for sale.

Ms Nolan interjected.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Ms SIMPSON: I have news for you, sunshine: I knew that Queensland Rail and the transport department were leaking like a sieve because of this government's plans to flog off Queensland Rail. That is why I asked the question in the parliament. Yet the minister was so out of touch or not telling the truth that she claimed she did not know. Then a few days later in the *Sunday Mail* there it was—the plan of this government to sell off Queensland Rail. The big question here is: who knew what and when? When did this government really plan to flog off the assets of Queensland? If you wanted to know the true answer to that question you would not ask the Minister for Transport because her lack of knowledge does not exonerate the government in regard to its plans.

We knew in May that this government was looking at flogging off Queensland Rail. For the minister to claim that she had no idea clearly does not stack up. Premier Anna Bligh told Queenslanders before the last state election that they can count on her, but, as they are finding out, you cannot count on a Premier who does not tell Queenslanders about her secret plans to flog off state assets until after the election. Her No. 1 policy priority was, 'Don't tell people your secret plans.' The Premier did not trust Queenslanders to know, so how can they trust her now?

The government has also said that people's jobs in these government owned entities are safe, but, once again, the Minister for Transport in this place refused to guarantee her own job. She refused to put it on the line if a job went. We are already seeing that in a number of areas people's jobs are threatened, as has been outlined by my colleague the member for Toowoomba South, who told us that two workers have been sacked and other jobs casualised in Toowoomba. In many other places people's fear about their livelihoods continues to extend.

Most Queenslanders believe they were misled by this tricky, sneaky Labor government. The only jobs that this Labor government cares about are their own. It is only their own jobs that they care about. People have been misled by the Premier and her Labor government over their plans for a highly controversial plan which has caused a great deal of anger and distress, particularly for workers whose livelihoods are on the line.

There is a simple way that the government can prove its honesty or dishonesty tonight and that is to release all the documents, particularly prior to the election, regarding the advice it has taken about the asset sales and its decisions. Release all the documents. That is what our motion is calling for: a release of the advice that the Premier has received, not her selective quotations. The Premier is very good at selective quotations, but she does get herself a bit tied up in knots. On the one hand she is saying that we

should trust her that they did not intend before the last state election to sell these assets. Then in the estimates hearing the Leader of the Opposition questioned the Premier about this. He said—

... why did you choose to hide the possibility of asset sales during the election campaign and deliberately mislead the people of Queensland?

The Premier replied—

... we made it very clear that these were the sort of things that might have to be contemplated.

Now we have the government claiming that it had no plans before the last election to sell those assets. They cannot have it both ways. That is why people are really angry. They do not like being misled. They do not like being told one thing by a government and then after the election a totally different thing happens.

This Labor government has been milking the state owned assets, the assets that actually do have the potential to return money into the coffers of Queensland. However, it has also built up significant debt against them by running them down and not maintaining them. It has bled the milch cow and now it is wanting to slaughter it and eat its meat. That is not how you fix the budget.

This government could not run a blooming chook raffle. The answer that it has given before this House does not satisfy us that it is going to turn the budget around and restore the AAA rating that it disgracefully lost. As we have heard, the sale of Queensland Rail alone would pay for the peak interest bill for only 18 months.

(Time expired)