




Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Tuesday, 5 April 2011

AJ WYLLIE BRIDGE

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (12.12 pm): Commuters are frustrated as they are caught in traffic jams several kilometres long and small businesses are hurting from loss of customers as regular road users avoid the AJ Wyllie Bridge over the North Pine River. I heard the Premier claiming this morning how quickly the government is responding to fix infrastructure damaged in the floods. Well, not in this area. The Premier did not mention any time frame to fix this problem bridge between Petrie and Lawnton.

The government has taken this area for granted and grown complacent about the impact of the loss of these northbound lanes and has been slow to respond. It is three months since this critical link over the North Pine River was damaged in the floods, halving the capacity of this very busy road with only the southbound lanes able to be utilised for two lanes of traffic. The impact has been made worse due to the fact that the other local alternative route is via Youngs Crossing, and it is flood prone. When water is released from North Pine Dam, this road is closed. This community really has suffered a double whammy.

In addition, motorists from Dayboro do not even get the courtesy of a 'road closed' sign near that town to warn them that further down the road Youngs Crossing is closed. That is another issue, but it is worth mentioning as it is an example of how the state government and its agencies need to step up to the plate and help the community. As well as delivering a new bridge, in the meantime there is a need to help with better traffic management. This should also include the community of Dayboro and district to give them fair warning of road closures closer to home so they can take an alternative route.

The minister only announced the decision to replace the AJ Wyllie Bridge recently after LNP candidates Trevor Ruthenberg and Seath Holswich, together with the community, publicly lobbied for action—

Mr WALLACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find those comments offensive. They are untrue. We had divers have a look at that bridge. She is questioning the integrity of those divers, and I ask that those comments be withdrawn.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Does the minister find the comments personally offensive?

Mr WALLACE: I do, Madam Deputy Speaker. I find those comments personally offensive.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to withdraw.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That is not in accordance with the standing orders. It is not a personal reflection.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the member to withdraw.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the standing orders. That is not a personal reflection in regard to the minister. I ask for a ruling in this regard.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to withdraw her comments.

Ms SIMPSON: Madam Deputy Speaker, I withdraw whatever the minister finds offensive.

Ms Male: No, unconditionally.

Ms SIMPSON: Well that is the only provision within the standing orders. The minister only announced the decision to replace the AJ Whyllie Bridge after public uproar about the fact that it had been so slow to respond. Our candidates, Trevor Ruthenberg and Seath Holswich, together with the community, publicly lobbied for action. However, I share their concern that more needs to be done by the government to help this community. We want to see more from the government—some compassion and support for this community and its local businesses, help with traffic management and the fast-tracking of the bridge's replacement. The delay in announcing a replacement has no doubt slowed down this process.

A new bridge is good news, but we want to see more done to bring the construction of a new bridge forward and to address these critical issues that I have mentioned. Three months have passed since the northbound lanes were closed. This has a huge ongoing impact on this community. The traffic chaos continues for the people in this area. We will stand up, along with this community, and advocate for more to be done, because these people are hurting.

The response from the government has been slow. But the impact on the people has been fast, with businesses and locals feeling the impact on their pay packets and their pockets. I want to draw the attention of the government again to the fact that people do not have many local alternatives. Youngs Crossing Road floods frequently, leaving this bridge as the only link to these communities, except for a very large diversion.

Action on the AJ Whyllie Bridge has been long overdue even before the floods. There has been concern about the fact that this old bridge has not seen the attention of government particularly in regard to timely maintenance. What we have seen as a result is a community that has been left stranded. They have been left in a situation of intolerable hardship and, for many of those businesses, there is a question mark over whether they will survive.

This area is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia and the residents are tired of the inadequate transport infrastructure. They are tired of the fact that this government has been so slow to respond. We need to see a faster response in addressing these valid concerns, and more needs to be done than what has been announced to date.