




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

**APPROPRIATION BILLS: TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE**

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.01 am): In my capacity as shadow minister for main roads, I rise to voice the opposition's concerns about the Newman government's dismal record on roads funding. First let us deal with the thorny issue of the Bruce Highway and the government's election promise to spend an additional \$1 billion on this critical highway over a decade. It is a big promise. But the government's performance so far tells us that it is one that they have failed to deliver on. When he was questioned at estimates, the minister could not point to this extra money that was promised by the Newman government. When he was asked about the government's endorsement of the federal opposition's promise to lavish \$6.7 billion on the Bruce, which would mean the state government chipping in with the small matter of \$1.8 billion, the minister was equally secretive. He did not commit to increasing the level of state funding, despite wholeheartedly endorsing Tony Abbott's plan. This just goes to show that those statements were political and made in the best interests of the Liberal Party in mind and not Queenslanders. The minister could not explain whether all the money that his party claims will be spent on the highway was additional or new or what the government calls base funding. That is because it is not new funding. It is mostly money that Labor has already committed to spending.

The government's record on road funding to date is one that they should be ashamed of. The backbenchers come in here and bleat the lines that have been given to them by the minister about how everything is rosy and they are investing more in roads. But here are the facts: maintenance spending on the national network last year was \$218 million. This year it will be \$148.3 million—a cut of \$69.7 million. Total funding for the national network last year, excluding National Disaster Relief Recovery Arrangement funding, was \$1.568 billion. This year it will be \$1.258 billion—a cut of \$310 million. Maybe the state network will fare better. Do not hold your breath. Total funding for the state network last year, excluding disaster funding, was \$1.813 billion. This year it will be \$1.652 billion—a cut of \$161.6 million. And finally let us consider the amount this government is directing towards construction and projects spending. It was \$1.293 billion last year. This year it will be \$1.07 billion—a cut of \$223 million. That is at least \$764.3 million less that will be spent on Queensland roads this year than in the previous 12 months. So much for investing in roads and investing in regional Queensland. At this rate what were previously serviceable roads will deteriorate.

This government is sowing the seeds for more and more problems on our road network by cutting maintenance spending. Not exactly a forward thinking government. I am sure those who live in Far North Queensland like me would like to know why the Newman government believes they are worthy of a \$180 million cut in the amount spent on their national and state road network in 2013-14. Similarly, I am sure that councils up and down the state would be grateful for an explanation of the decision to cut more than \$20 million from the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme, not just this year but last year, too. For the record, under the previous Labor government the amount of

funding to assist local councils under TIDS was more than \$65 million while for the last two years under the Newman government spending has fallen to \$43.5 million, placing additional funding pressure on councils. Is it too much to ask for a commitment to at least increase spending on the scheme each year to keep pace with rising construction costs? Better still, restore TIDS funding to the level it was during the last Labor administration.

I also want to place on record the opposition's serious concern that RoadTek's ability to respond to natural disasters has been compromised by the Newman government's addiction to job slashing. At estimates it was confirmed that 522 jobs have been shed at RoadTek since the Newman government took office. How can the minister seriously believe that RoadTek's ability to respond to natural disasters has not been diminished, especially in regional areas, by this massive round of job cuts? We all know that the minister is determined to destroy RoadTek in South-East Queensland and outsource its operations in the rest of Queensland. The Costello report tells us that much. This government has done to the roads budget what it has done to the rest of the Public Service—it has slashed it. It is simply not good enough and we will be holding the government to account each and every day as Queensland's road infrastructure unfortunately gets worse under the LNP.