




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

MOTION: CROSS RIVER RAIL

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.40 pm): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for South Brisbane. Only days after the election of an Abbott government, Queenslanders are already missing out on vital infrastructure projects thanks to Tony Abbott and the Newman government. It did not take them long. Despite Cross River Rail being assessed as necessary and vital to meeting South-East Queensland's public transport needs, the Abbott government has turned its back. This is despite the previous federal Labor government committing \$715 million to make this shovel-ready project a reality. A federal Labor government provided exactly what the Newman government asked for to proceed with this project. Now Queensland taxpayers will be forced to stump up this money, all so the Newman government could engage in a cheap game of political point-scoring by rejecting federal Labor's funding offer. Worse still, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads is now talking about raiding funding for the Bruce Highway to pay for a cut-down rail project in South-East Queensland, a project that will not deliver the economic benefits of Cross River Rail, while potentially raiding funding allocations for the Bruce Highway.

Yesterday the Minister for Transport and Main Roads was quoted as saying that because Mr Abbott says he will pay 80 per cent towards federal road projects, the Newman government will have more money to spend on other projects. This sounds very much like the Newman government angling to renege on its promise to provide \$1 billion for the Bruce Highway over 10 years. The Newman government needs to commit here today that it will not break its promise to regional communities to spend \$1 billion over 10 years on the Bruce Highway. This funding for the Bruce Highway is not currently accounted for in the budget papers. The LNP has tried to make a virtue of its election promise of \$1 billion on the Bruce Highway over the next 10 years, all the while ignoring the fact that the former Queensland government was already spending on average \$116 million per year, above the \$100 million average promised by the LNP. Despite saying money for the Bruce Highway is locked in the budget, the minister must explain why money earmarked for the Bruce Highway is now available to spend on other projects. Based on the government's record on roads funding to date—which has been dismal—people can take no comfort in the minister's suggestion that funding is locked in the budget.

Queenslanders should be concerned. Just over this year roads funding has been cut by \$764 million by the Newman government compared to the year before. So much for investing in roads and investing in regional Queensland, as it promised. There has also been a \$20 million cut in Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme funding for local governments across Queensland. This Newman government, like the Abbott government, is all talk and no action when it comes to infrastructure. The LNP are only interested in lining their own pockets through outsourcing front-line services to donors, not on delivering the vital infrastructure needed to grow our economy and provide prosperity for our future. We need only look at what is being lost in economic benefits with the scrapping of the Cross River Rail project. Engineers Australia earlier this year said—

Major infrastructure projects like the Cross River Rail promote employment, increased productivity and underpin Queensland's future economic growth.

Engineers Australia further stated—

Any delays to an infrastructure project of this magnitude will lead to labour force planning implications and place increased pressure on the engineering profession and the Queensland economy.

The Queensland economy has already slowed under a Newman government, as set out in the state budget papers and as stated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. According to the environmental impact statement for Cross River Rail the project is expected to boost gross state product in its first year by \$653 million. The benefit to the economy of building this productivity enhancing infrastructure would be in excess of \$1 billion per year within the next 30 years. Productivity benefits would flow to current significant road users, including the construction, mining and manufacturing industries. The project would also involve a peak construction workforce of 2,240 people with 113 ongoing operational jobs supported. Cross River Rail is also expected to support more than 5,000 indirect jobs through improvements to productivity.

The previous Queensland Labor government invested \$60 billion in generational infrastructure over four years. This investment kept unemployment lower than it has been under the Newman government. Investment in hospitals, schools and roads protected more than 100,000 jobs in Queensland during the world's worst global economic crisis since the Great Depression. Under the Newman government there are 4,700 fewer full-time jobs than when it was elected, with economic growth now slower at three per cent down from four per cent. And we can expect the chronic underfunding of productivity enhancing infrastructure that we saw under the Howard government to return—a Howard government that wasted the revenue of the boom years, a Howard government that was labelled by the International Monetary Fund's Fiscal Affairs Department earlier this year as the most fiscally profligate government in Australian history—that is, the most wasteful and fiscally reckless government in Australian history. We can expect much of the same from an Abbott government that thinks it is more important to use workers' taxes to subsidise \$75,000 cash handouts for multimillionaires seeking paid parental leave rather than on the crucial infrastructure required to grow Queensland's economy; an Abbott government that thinks your taxes should be used to buy boats in Indonesia rather than roads for regional Queensland or train networks for the south-east corner.

When it comes to financial competence, economic management and the delivery of infrastructure this Newman government is a can't-do government, a can't-do government which is already letting Queenslanders down and selling us short on the projects needed for our future prosperity.