



Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2016

CROSS RIVER RAIL DELIVERY AUTHORITY BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.08 pm): If ever we have heard in this House a diatribe that is not worth listening to, it is the one we have just heard from the member for Yeerongpilly. If ever there was a frustrated planning minister it is the member for Yeerongpilly. I remember the now member for Yeerongpilly when he was a failed councillor. I remember him when he could not get the seat after his mate Tim Quinn became the mayor. Helen Abrahams came in and there he was, the poor little deputy chairman—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have never spent a day in opposition in a chamber with this man—never.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): There is no point of order.

Mr POWER: Far be it from me to give the opposition leader pointers, but should he not be relevant to the bill, rather than describe the career of the Minister for Main Roads?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr NICHOLLS: When the minister says that he was never in opposition, he did not have the courage to. He ran away in 2004. It was all too hard for him. He had a little fit and decided he would nick off somewhere. I am not quite sure where it was. He disappeared into the darkness, all because—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Clayfield is still not speaking to the bill. I ask him to come back to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I will bring you to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Absolutely. I was just responding to the comments by the member for Yeerongpilly, who displayed no shortage of personal vitriol when he was speaking in respect of the actions of the LNP in government. I think it is salutary to reflect on the motives of the member for Yeerongpilly. That motive is clearly his frustration at never being able to get the job that he wanted. The job he wanted was planning chair in the Brisbane City Council. We are talking about planning here—planning around land use and planning around future transport infrastructure needs. These are all the desires of the member for Yeerongpilly that have been unfulfilled over a long, unrewarding and unremarkable career in the political field.

Tonight we are discussing the authority that the government seeks to create to do what it does best—that is, create another bureaucracy but still fail to deliver. It was the Labor Party that from 2006 to 2012 failed to deliver anything in respect of the Cross River Rail project. It did deliver four different estimates of how much it would cost. It did deliver a station down near the Park Royal that was going to flood. It did not deliver an integrated solution for Brisbane's rail river crossing problems.

What those opposite are seeking to do tonight, in the last gasp of this parliamentary sitting year, is pass a bill to create another bureaucracy. What bureaucracies do we already have that could possibly handle this? There is the Department of Transport and Main Roads. One would think that a department with something of the order of 6,000 employees would be able to manage the design and delivery of a

rail project. There is also Queensland Rail. Those on the other side of the chamber may not trust Queensland Rail—they certainly cannot manage Queensland Rail—but we have a rail authority that would be able to deliver the project.

As the member for Callide has pointed out, Economic Development Queensland is designed specifically to do this type of work. The Deputy Premier has trust in that body to deliver the Northshore Hamilton project, the Commonwealth Games and part of the Queen's Wharf precinct, but it cannot deliver on the Cross River Rail project. When the Economic Development Bill was brought to this House in November 2012, the Deputy Premier opposed the establishment of that organisation. She opposed it and she opposed the delegation of planning powers to EDQ, yet she now seeks to use the very legislation she opposed in this place to delegate more powers to another—in her terms—unelected and unrepresentative body. The Coordinator-General is another department that could help deliver the Cross River Rail project. The Coordinator-General was certainly not absent when it came to delivering Airportlink. In fact, the entire project was overseen by the Coordinator-General's department.

There is bureaucracy upon bureaucracy. If you listened to the Deputy Premier and those opposite you would think that, by some magical waving of the wand and the passing of this legislation tonight, Cross River Rail would suddenly roll out tomorrow—that it would suddenly sprout out of the ground fully formed and built. Nothing could be further from the truth, because this government fails on the one fundamental test for the delivery of any river crossing project—that is, being able to find the money to deliver it.

We hear the pious stories about value capture. Let us look at value capture. How does it work? It works because the government picks up the increase in values of land around projects that are being built. That is the fundamental premise of it: as the value increases the government says, 'We will take a little bit of that.' Value capture is nothing more than a tax. That is a word those opposite do not like to use, but it is nothing more than a tax.

We already have those taxes here in Queensland. They are called land tax, rates and GST. They all collect on the uplift in value. Value capture is a tax on other taxes, if you look at it that way. There is no way in the world—and the business case admits it—that value capture will ever provide the billions of dollars necessary for another rail crossing of the Brisbane River.

The need to cross the river is not doubted. The need to provide better public transport links is not doubted. What is doubted is the ability of this government to find the necessary funds to build it anytime soon. They are already arguing over their ephemeral operating surplus, reported on today. They do not know whether to pay down debt, whether to pay for the extra public servants they have put on or whether to invest it on infrastructure.

Let us now also deal with the claims made by the member for Yeerongpilly and by others that the state failed to take up an offer by Anthony Albanese in relation to Cross River Rail—a supposed offer of \$750 million. What those opposite will not tell you is that the deal came with strings attached that would have cost Queensland. Any money that was being provided by the federal government under the deal offered by Anthony Albanese would have been redistributed away by the Commonwealth Grants Commission in the next three years. Anthony Albanese sought to give with one hand and over the next three years take back with the other hand in the Commonwealth grants redistribution process.

We were there to protect Queenslanders. We went back to the federal government and said, 'If you want to make a grant for Cross River Rail, make it on the same terms that you offered to your mates in the Bligh Labor government and get the Treasurer to give us a piece of paper that says that it will not be included for the purposes of redistribution under the Commonwealth Grants Commission.' Do honourable members know what? They said no. They would not provide the funds on the same basis that they provided the \$300 million that went into the Redcliffe peninsula rail line. They wanted to hand over \$750 million in one way and tax it back from Queensland taxpayers in another. We said, 'That is no deal for Queensland. That is no deal that is going to deliver for Queensland.' That was not going to provide the money necessary to build a proper and effective Cross River Rail project.

Make no mistake: that deal would be costing Queenslanders now and we would not be delivering the other infrastructure that we were able to put in place across the state. The Commonwealth Games would not be being delivered now. The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing would not be being delivered now. The billions of dollars going into the Bruce Highway upgrade would not be being delivered now if that mangy, tight-fisted deal offered by Anthony Albanese had been accepted by the state of Queensland because of the way the Commonwealth Grants Commission operates to redistribute the funds that are made by grants.

Another flaw in this bill is the complete lack of transparency. I have seen how these operations work. City North Infrastructure, which delivered the Airportlink, was not covered by any right to information application. Queensland residents were worse off for it and people in my electorate were worse off because of it and that is why I will be supporting the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's amendments tonight.