



Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**


**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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## **TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

### **Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (3.52 pm): I too rise to make a brief contribution on the inquiry into the operations of toll roads in Queensland as the shadow minister. I will state from the outset that I too was very disappointed with the overall outcome and the actual findings. I absolutely stand by the statement of reservation, and I will articulate some of the reasons why in my contribution.

There was absolutely no surprise when we read the capex statements in the last couple of budgets that have been presented. There is the evidence; it is pretty straightforward. The Labor government has struggled—in fact, struggled supremely—to find the funding required to source infrastructure for this fast-growing state, particularly the South-East Queensland corner. As a consequence, urban congestion in particular is a major problem. I would challenge anyone in this chamber to counter that argument. It is becoming chock-a-block in South-East Queensland when it comes to transport on the roads, and this obviously results in a substantial economic loss.

Under our plan on this side of the chamber, congestion is probably our No. 1 priority to try to fix. We have identified that the greater use of toll roads could form part of an overall network solution—not be a complete solution—where better alignment of demand with the existing toll capacity would have a material effect on overall traffic volumes. Effectively, what we were looking to do was to sweat the asset on a balance sheet. At the end of the day, I too can play the game of ‘who sold what’, and I may indeed come back to that, but the rationale for calling for this toll road inquiry was to indeed try to sweat that asset better on behalf of not the government and not the opposition but the good burghers of Queensland to try to get better efficiency through that particular system.

There was another issue as well. We were also concerned about the overall level of customer complaints that the monopoly toll road operator was experiencing. We found out that Queensland had by far the highest number of complaints in the nation. With toll roads being a valuable yet underutilised piece of infrastructure, the LNP indeed called for, and had a compelling case for, an inquiry to look into toll roads in this state. I am very pleased that the government supported our call for that. I will make a call-out to the committee chair. I attended the first of the public open sessions. I have said this in the past, but I think the member chairs a well-run committee meeting. I also pay my respect to the members on my side of the chamber—the members for Callide and Hervey Bay—who contributed towards the work.

The Transport and Public Works Committee undertook the inquiry, which involved public hearings and an examination of 199 submissions. Many individuals and organisations contributed to the inquiry by bringing to light their concerns about the toll roads as well as providing very useful suggestions for the committee to consider. On 13 September this year the Transport and Public Works Committee tabled its report which included, as has been said by the previous speaker, five recommendations designed to address the issues identified by the inquiry.

I think it is fair to say that the report's recommendations do go some way to offering a potential solution for certain issues such as monitoring technological advances with a view to reducing fees and charges, introducing better customer complaint resolution measures and establishing a Queensland based toll road ombudsman. All of these are supported by the LNP. It was quite extraordinary that on the day I was at the toll road inquiry we heard, amongst many things, that the ombudsman was actually based somewhere in Victoria. I believe it was established that it was a facsimile machine based in a post office in Hawthorn, Victoria. That is absolutely outrageous.

Given the fact that I have limited time, I will say that the reality is that the recommendations fell well short of what was required to deliver a better deal for motorists and help take the pressure off the rest of the network. In view of these shortcomings, the LNP members of the committee did indeed submit a statement of reservation, which amongst other things did not accept the toll operator's position that there is no discretion to provide incentives for motorists to encourage greater use of these facilities. We absolutely urge the government to continue to work with Transurban and other stakeholders to again try and sweat this very valuable asset in order to bust congestion.