



Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)**

**Appropriation Bill**

**Transport and Resources Committee, Report**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (6.28 pm): The evidence provided to the Transport and Resources Committee demonstrates that this government is losing control of major transport projects. There is no larger example of the government losing control than the Cross River Rail project. The true cost remains a mystery. We do know that it is higher than the \$5.4 billion number that is often quoted by Minister Bailey, with the budget documents stating that the capital project cost is closer to \$6.9 billion. However, questions remain about other components of the project, such as the Clapham rail stabling yards. Those are separate line items in the budget. When you add those separate line items, the total cost could be closer to \$7.4 billion.

During the estimates hearing, representatives of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority advised that passengers will start using Cross River Rail in 2025. That is contrary to previous government statements, such as a ministerial statement from April 2019 that states—

Cross River Rail would be ready to service the South-East by 2024.

While Cross River Rail is certainly shaping as the government's greatest project management failure, it is not, sadly, the only one. Despite previously stating that the Coomera Connector would start construction in mid-2021, a contractor is yet to be appointed for the first section of stage 1. The full completion of stage 1 by 2024-25 is looking indeed very doubtful. Last Wednesday's truck rollover on the M1 at Pimpama shows why we desperately need the Coomera Connector. The incident happened at 1.45 pm but was not cleared until around 8.15 pm. Traffic was backed up for 20 kilometres. The TMR website used to say that stage 1 construction would start in mid-2021. The website confirms that the project is still in the preconstruction phase. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads needs to advise the House of the reason for the delay, how he will get the project back on track and exactly when motorists will be able to actually use this road.

The transport and main roads department has also refused to commit to the stated 2024 completion date for the Beerburrum to Nambour rail duplication. That project currently has a \$10½ million underspend, and the planned 2021-22 expenditure has almost been halved. The Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3 project was meant to start construction by Christmas last year. The contract for the main work is yet to be signed.

It is not just major construction projects this minister has difficulty in delivering. The government also previously announced the development of a regional airfares tracking tool but has since decided that it is not needed. The department could not advise what resources were wasted on this initiative before it was cancelled. South Australia has had digital drivers' licences since 2017 and New South Wales since 2019. When Queenslanders will get them remains unknown, despite a successful trial being completed in 2020.

Integrity also remains an issue for this government. Again, the minister has been unable to answer questions about a matter because it was before the CCC—it always is—or commercial-in-confidence. This time it related to the appointment of the CEO of Gladstone Ports Corporation. The board had made a unanimous recommendation for the appointment of an individual, but the reasons the minister did not agree with this decision remain indeed a deep mystery. The department was also unable to provide any details on the appointment of Owen Doogan—the former head of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, a major Labor donor—to the board of North Queensland Bulk Ports.

The almost \$6 billion maintenance backlog continues to hinder Economic Development Queensland. There is no better example of this than the Barron River Bridge. Bridge restrictions were meant to be in place until September while serious structural issues were addressed. The department has now said that it will be at least October 2021. I inspected the bridge last week when I spent time in Cairns. I was stuck on the Kuranda side of the bridge for nearly 14 minutes, even though the department said two minutes. It was stated at estimates that two minutes was the average delay time, yet there is a sign 200 metres up the road from the bridge which says—

**Ms Boyd** interjected.

**Mr MINNIKIN:**—and I will speak slowly for the member for Pine Rivers—'expect 15 minutes'. That is another big fail associated with this minister.