



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Transport and Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.55 pm): I look forward to the Minister for Transport advocating for a longer estimates hearing next year. He seems very concerned that we have not had an opportunity to ask questions of some of his departmental staff. I am more than happy to sit for an additional four, five, six, seven, eight, 10 or 12 hours. I am more than happy to come back on another day. I am more than happy for the minister to give shorter answers and/or stop his Dorothy Dixers from his own side.

Let me turn to a couple of things that came out of this hearing which were very important. One thing that the people in my electorate, particularly the people who live at Highfields, have been very interested in is whether we are developing a road for a north-south corridor. There has been a lot of discussion about this over the years. I have been a strong advocate that this north-south corridor should go via Boundary Street. The corridor has had \$2.422 million spent on investigating it. That is a good investment because it needs investigating. It is definitely a traffic problem for the community in the future and it needs to be addressed. A corridor needs to be protected, and we need to understand the triggers for when we need to start developing that corridor.

Unfortunately, there is almost nobody in Highfields who would suggest that what was outlined to us at estimates—which is the corridor going via Charlton—will be particularly helpful at all for any of the commuter traffic that is currently blocking the New England Highway. The road should clearly go from Highfields to Westbrook and around to the New England Highway on the south side of Toowoomba via Boundary Street.

It is a really important corridor and one that will protect the western suburbs from congestion into the future. I ask the minister to go back and have a look at that. I look forward to getting some more details on that particular topic from the department. I am sure that we can come to a sensible decision. The overpass for the Toowoomba bypass is already built. It is already there, so the people of Highfields will be able to connect straight to it if we simply jump across Gowrie Creek and the old rail line. I look forward to that.

With regard to royalties and sovereign risk in our resources industry, I was told repeatedly that the royalty regime is not something that should be discussed in the briefing for mining because it is Treasury's remit. There is a 30-year plan for how we are going to manage resource exploration and development in Queensland but it is not allowed to include any discussion on royalties. I suggest that it

is somewhat naive to put that plan together without discussing what is a key cost base for industry. BHP CEO Mike Henry said, 'We've had changes to the Queensland royalty regime which were quite sudden and didn't involve any engagement with industry which has been a significant increase in the sovereign risk associated with Queensland.'

We are talking about a metallurgical mine that has a 90-year life, will employ several thousand people and provide great revenue into the future. We are all going to need steel no matter what. Discussions about sovereign risk and royalties should have happened between the Treasurer and his cabinet colleague whose portfolio it is. In terms of sovereign risk, ask the people at Acland Coal Mine whether they think the process they have had to go through has increased or decreased sovereign risk for the development of resources in Queensland.

The last thing I want to mention is the \$175 energy rebate that was announced on 26 May. What an announcement. The people of Queensland had been waiting with bated breath for this. The Premier said at the time that people were making difficult choices, including going without. Well, Premier, they have had to go without for many months subsequently because it would appear that the minister and his department have been unable to work out how to deliver this rebate to the people of Queensland. As their substantial winter bills are arriving, the rebate is not there.

I would also add that there needs to be a network upgrade at Highfields because there have been 16 unplanned outages in the last month. I look forward to the minister looking into that and making sure those unplanned outages do not continue into the future.

(Time expired)