




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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ADJOURNMENT

Sunshine Coast, Infrastructure Projects

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (7.31 pm): Announcements of reviews to the Commonwealth funding for infrastructure for states and territories has demonstrated our failings. Many vital infrastructure projects in the pipeline from Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast rail links, upgrades of regional transport networks and funding to support SEQ urban infrastructure are at risk of being defunded. These projects take many years to get the green tick, borne from need, advocated for by communities and their MPs. Cuts create instability and frustration for all.

As I responded at the recent Sunshine Coast Business Council to the question around how the three tiers of government can effectively collaborate to deliver infrastructure, surety can be provided through coordination and cooperation among parties and governments, with binding agreements that are not affected by the election cycle. Infrastructure Australia is an independent agency that maintains a list of priority infrastructure projects, such as the Beerburrum to Nambour rail upgrade. By being elevated to more than an advisory body, there is opportunity to take the politics out of projects such as occurs in other countries. For example, Infrastructure Canada is directly involved in funding and guiding projects in the provinces, signing detailed, binding long-term bilateral infrastructure agreements to deliver certainty. Most European countries are capable of maintaining a consistent and pre-agreed pipeline of infrastructure projects between governments. However, as noted in a recent article in the *Times* UK, in countries such as Britain and Australia that have a two-party system, there is less incentive to agree on long-term planning with your main opposition.

Partisanship is problematic. That the Commonwealth government halts projects committed to by previous governments, yet will not allow an independent review of the current government's election commitments is one example. So where does that get us at the next change of government? The same costly cycle. The benefits of the European approach, rather than our Westminster style, allow for predictable and constant commissioning of projects with engineering capabilities and skills developed over the long term, with project machinery maximised and capability retention built from surety.

Our two-party partisan system is so entrenched that it has stifled remedies, reflected in our own parliament's reluctance to review our processes on how to move beyond the partisan nature that is impacting every aspect of Queenslanders' lives. This includes necessary infrastructure, services and programs that get delayed or cut because of politics instead of the business of delivering.

We can make change. Reform the committee system to build an environment that encourages bipartisanship. Bring in binding agreements that transcend between levels of government or election outcomes. Our focus must be on how we can end the unsustainable battle where there are no winners, only ongoing congestion, shortfalls and increasing frustration in governments and their MPs.