



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Transport and Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.21 pm): In my contribution today I will start with the question that I asked the transport minister which was: would he be prepared to have a public forum and attend a community forum in Toowoomba regarding a particular north-south corridor? This question was batted back by saying, 'We are personalising the consultation process.' I outlined that that question was literally from my community.

My community have some grave concerns about this corridor and the minister seemed to be unwilling to answer them. What needs to be understood is that the minister is, in fact, part of the executive that represents this portfolio and is the one person who can actually stop the consultation and restart it in a more appropriate way. I call on the minister to look at this corridor. We know we need a corridor but this corridor is the wrong corridor. That is what the question was getting to.

There were some other questions that I would like to have asked if there had been more time. Those questions were: what were the six alternative routes that were considered by the department? What were the outcomes of the environmental impact assessment that we are told has been done? What was the consultation process for directly impacted landholders and what will it be? What will the highway look like? Many people in my community want to know exactly what this highway will look like. They are afraid that it is going to be a freeway going straight through their backyards. How will the fire risk of this corridor once it is protected be managed? Given the limited consultation in the process to date, will the minister stop the process, talk to the community in an open and transparent way, providing specific details of the corridor, and consider alternative corridors that are available? Those are the questions that my community want to ask the minister.

We were told on the day that there would be some other consultation going on in the community. I would like to table this after I have read from it. Some feedback sessions have been put on in my community—in fact, six have been offered—from 16 August through to 25 August. What is disappointing is that, of those six, four have now been cancelled by the department. In actual fact, one small shopping centre in Highfields—one small part of the community—is the only place that consultation has been available to the public. That in my opinion is unacceptable. The minister needs to halt this process, listen to the community, reassess this corridor alignment, and restart this process in an open and

transparent way. That should happen both for the Toowoomba north-south connector and for the Highfields southern connector—two corridors that everybody in the community knows are required.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Feedback Sessions', relating to the Toowoomba North South Transport Corridor [1176](#).

The minister is a member of the executive and the person who allocates funds for these things to be done—and we are told a couple of million dollars has been spent on this. It should be done in an appropriate, open and transparent way with my community being consulted all the way through, rather than being completely blindsided—this road goes straight over the top of people's houses and properties in a very unfair and unreasonable way—and using mapping that is from 2012 in some cases.

On another aspect, the Minister for Resources was skiting about the Fraser Institute and how wonderful it is that Queensland's ranking has gone up. There is one part of the Fraser Institute's assessment which is about policy perception. This is the part of the Fraser Institute's assessment that the government actually has some control over based on the policy it has as opposed to the international price of coal going up.

What I would like to say is that Queensland is now in 28th place—down seven places in the last 12 months. The minister is skiting about Queensland's improvement, but Queensland has gone down seven places. It should be noted that in that time New South Wales has overtaken Queensland for the first time since the Palaszczuk government came to power. It has gone up 17 places in the Fraser Institute's Policy Perception Index. It has gone up 17 places while we have gone down seven places. This is the first time New South Wales has overtaken Queensland.

Western Australia is in 10th place above Queensland. South Australia is in third place, going up 13 places in the Fraser Institute's Policy Perception Index. Whilst South Australia has gone up 13 places in the last year and New South Wales has gone up 17 places in the last year, Queensland has gone down seven places—and the minister is proud of his record and that of his department! It is an embarrassment, and that is all before BHP have been threatened by this government.

(Time expired)