



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 4

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (2.48 pm): I reiterate the member for Burnett's comments. It was a great night. It was a shame he could not make it. He missed my full volley from the edge of the box into the top corner. It was not a mis-hit at all and completely intentional! There was also an amazing assist from the member for Bundamba.

Under the LNP Crisafulli government, ambulance ramping has reached its worst levels on record. Ramping rates have reached all-time highs of 44.8 per cent in June and 47.8 in July. That is 47.8 per cent of patients—nearly half of all patients—forced to wait a minimum of 30 minutes before they can even be admitted to emergency departments. It is in this environment that this government has put a halt to the Prince Charles Hospital redevelopment on the north side. Just like the transport minister, it seems the health minister is quick on promises but slow on delivery.

Recently we saw the future of the southern Gold Coast derailed by the LNP. The Deputy Premier's review into stage 4 of Gold Coast Light Rail confirms that this government had no intention of delivering this project all along. It was doomed from the start. That is entirely on brand for the LNP. We saw the Deputy Premier, supported by the members for Currumbin and Burleigh, proudly announce the official cancellation of stage 4—happily posing for selfies, cutting the final stage of a project only to offer a handful of buses in return.

Does that sound familiar? I am getting flashbacks to Sunshine Coast rail. At least on the Sunshine Coast, before the announcement they had the time and the organisation to create some sloppy AI images of what a metro bus would look like. I have some pictures here. Unfortunately, they did not think to look at what side of a bus the doors are on so there are some pictures with doors on the right-hand side of a bus and some with doors on the left-hand side of a bus.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McDonald): Will you table those, member for Aspley?

Mr MELLISH: I am happy to table those.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'The Wave' [1246](#).

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'North Coast Region: The Wave' [1247](#).

They call it the Wave, but under their plan what we would really see is a wave of pedestrian fatalities, with passengers exiting into traffic. Just as with that decision, the Deputy Premier has dumped this on the transport minister, who will have to clean up his mess. Stage 4 was not just an extension; it formed the critical next link in the Gold Coast light rail network, connecting the airport through the coastal corridor to the wider Gold Coast city. This transformative project has now been relegated to the LNP's ever-growing public transport graveyard.

Under the Deputy Premier's direction, his department ran a deeply flawed consultation process where it seems the outcome was predetermined. They even had to change the survey halfway through to exclude people from the northern Gold Coast and further afield—the very people set to benefit most from the light rail being connected to the airport. It was clear from leading survey questions that this review was never about finding the best solution. It was simply about justifying a political decision so that the member for Burleigh and the member for Currumbin did not have construction in their electorates during the next election. Cutting a viable, much needed piece of transport infrastructure to protect vulnerable members of parliament is exactly what we have come to expect from this government, but Queenslanders deserve better. If we are honest, this was not about what is best for the local community; it was about politics.

Some 13 million people visit the Gold Coast every year, injecting over \$8 billion into the local economy. Stage 4 of the light rail project would have supported and expanded on this vital industry by providing a connection to the airport. Instead, the dashed hopes for a seamless transport link have thrown the Gold Coast Airport's master plan into disarray. Queensland Airports Limited's CEO, Amelia Evans, said dumping light rail meant that the 20-year master plan must now be altered and resubmitted to the federal government, costing them more time, funds and energy well before any expansion can even start. What a waste. Remarkably, in February the Deputy Premier's director-general, John Sosso, said that the department of state development was not in the business of pricing rail projects, but then miraculously they costed this project at \$9.8 billion in order to kill it off. That figure was from the department of state development, which itself admitted that they do not know how to cost rail projects.

Let us delve further into the real reasons behind the cancellation. The respondents to the Deputy Premier's survey overwhelmingly said that they wanted to stop future development in Palm Beach, but cancelling public transport projects will not stop that development. The Gold Coast mayor himself confirmed that council's development plans for Palm Beach will not be affected by this short-sighted decision. The LNP is simply consigning the southern Gold Coast to be a car park for generations. They ripped up the rail line in the 1960s and now they have put a bullet in light rail.

Queensland deserves a public transport system that is reliable, accessible and integrated. Instead, the LNP is dragging us backwards. Infrastructure Gold Coast's Michael Kahler called the bus replacement plan a short-term option. He warned that, without the introduction of light rail, the Gold Coast will need another 580 bus services just to meet demand. This really sums up the LNP's plan for the southern Gold Coast: more buses stuck in traffic, more congestion and more frustration. This was a short-sighted decision and the southern Gold Coast will come to regret electing members of parliament who do not fight for them and do not fight for the Gold Coast.