



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GAVEN

ADJOURNMENT

Gold Coast Rapid Transit

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—Ind) (10.01 pm): At present, most Gold Coast residents are aware that a light rail system is being built at great cost in the city. In Surfers Paradise, Southport and Broadbeach, many businesses along the designated transport corridor are suffering terribly. Employees are being increasingly casualized and retrenched, and employers themselves are being consigned to the unemployment lines. Those living in units along the route are seeing their property values plummet, especially in Surfers Paradise. Many of those people are unable to move, even if they could. I am being contacted by a variety of those people who are fearful of what is to come. Most will never use the light rail and are bewildered by its intrusion into their idyllic lifestyles. Many are retirees living on pensions or fixed self-funded incomes.

The current pain is being exacerbated by the delay of the contractor, GoldLinQ McConnell Dowell, as it battles the state government over the problems that will follow building a new bridge west of the existing Sundale Bridge at Paradise Waters. Upstream flooding is a potential likely outcome of that construction, due to the effectual damming of the Nerang River by the piers. Upstream, Nerang River residents and canal-front homeowners are already fearful of the major flood implications of the proposed dredging of the Broadwater for a major cruise ship terminal on the western side of the Spit.

We need urgent circuit-breakers. Firstly, the new light rail bridge should be placed on the eastern side of the existing Sundale Bridge. Secondly, the cruise ships need to dock off-shore. A hotel or casino complex could be built next to Versace; do not even bother touching the Broadwater. In court, class actions from homeowners along the 700 kilometres of waterway will prevent any perceived gains. The state government could make this solution happen and it should. It is common sense.

The Gold Coast mayor has publicly stated he will join the class action against the light rail bridge building contractor and GoldLinQ. The reason is that he is a resident of Paradise Waters, where residents will see high tides rising 0.5 metres above their current heights after what will be done on the bridge alone. Their homes could become inundated on the flood tides alone. It will be disastrous when storm tidal surges occur with flooding rains simultaneously.

To make the light rail work into the medium term, it also makes sense to link to the heavier metropolitan rail at Parkwood. The distance is much shorter than the proposed stage 2 unfunded link to Harbour Town on Brisbane Road, Labrador. Informally, the contractor is sounding out whether the state may consider lengthening its operating contract to 28 years from the proposed 15 years, and it would fund the link from Parklands to Parkwood. That is a distance of 4.5 kilometres following the Smith Street route from Parklands. The state will need to commit to the cost of a new Parkwood Railway Station and the construction of a large park-and-ride facility, not unlike that at Ferny Grove. Some road relocations and modifications will be required to Smith Street. The costs are relatively low and the benefit huge; it will enable the light rail to succeed. In its present construct, it will most likely fail. It is a 13-kilometre connection to nowhere. I congratulate the *Gold Coast Bulletin* journalist Lucy Arden for her diligence in addressing this item, which affects those who need public transport along the Gold Coast route.