



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Thursday, 4 August 2011

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL:
TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE**

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (12.02 pm): I rise to speak to the estimates committee report of the Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee. I will focus my comments on my main roads and marine infrastructure responsibilities. A wide range of questions were asked in the estimates committee hearing. Unfortunately, few were answered. It was clear right from the beginning that the minister sought to hide from the public the failure of his government regarding main roads and marine infrastructure. However, the RACQ—the independent peak motoring body in Queensland—was more forthcoming with the facts. A recent RACQ report has confirmed that Queensland is home to the worst roads in the country. According to the RACQ's Australian Road Assessment Program report, 89 per cent of the Queensland road network is in the high- or medium-risk category. The RACQ concludes that, under the watch of this Labor government, Queensland has many of the most unroadworthy roads in Australia. To this day the minister refuses to acknowledge his government's role in the state's deteriorating road network, preferring to blame everyone else for it.

One thing that the minister and I agreed on was the importance of the NDRRA funds to repairing roads damaged by floods and Cyclone Yasi. I made the point that these funds were welcomed by all and were the legitimate entitlement of Queenslanders, who I noted had been severely impacted by these disasters. Although the minister was happy to speak about the disaster funding, he was less forthcoming about the \$326 million he has slashed from the state's Main Roads budget. Further, he sought in his answers to hide that fact under the disaster funds. The minister can deny that that is the case, but he has been caught red-handed by the RACQ in both slashing the budget and attempting to hide the budget cuts. This is what the RACQ said about the Queensland Main Roads budget for 2011-12 projected—

... if you take out the flood recovery money, Queenslanders are actually getting less for road upgrades.

Executive manager Michael Roth stated further—

... it is disappointing to see that the State's contribution to roads funding is going backwards while motorists are being asked to pay annual increases in registration fees and other government costs such as driver's licences.

That is the view of the independent umpire, but the minister would not face those facts. This is a damning indictment of this government's poor performance and one that the minister is yet to respond to. The budget figures reveal a massive planned reduced investment in state roads—a fact confirmed by the RACQ.

Instead of owning up to his planned budget cuts, the main roads minister—'Wally the slasher'—refused to acknowledge the budget cuts, instead hiding behind the disaster money and falsely claiming that they are making a record investment from state government coffers. At a time when the government should be investing more state funds into roads, in fact it is planning to invest fewer funds. Because the government went broke in a boom and racked up record debt, it is running deficit budgets in the years ahead.

Another question the minister failed to answer adequately was about the underspend or failure to invest in several road projects due to poor planning and delivery. Many projects experienced major underspends in 2010-11: the Dinmore-Goodna stretch of the Ipswich Motorway; the Cooroy-Curra section of the Bruce Highway; a 75 per cent failure to spend on the Cairns south grade separation works; an 84 per cent failure on the Temples Lane to Farrellys Lane duplication near Mackay; and a 36 per cent failure to spend on the Pacific Motorway between Nerang and Worongary. The list goes on and on.

Another area the minister failed to address adequately was the impact of federal Labor's carbon tax on the state Main Roads budget. It has been almost four weeks since the details of the carbon tax were announced by the Prime Minister, and Queensland Labor MPs refuse to stand up for Queenslanders.

Mr MOORHEAD: I rise to a point of order. The member is talking about a carbon tax which, by definition, starts beyond the time covered by the appropriations that are before the House.

Dr ROBINSON: They should be in the forward estimates.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr MOORHEAD: We are talking about approving appropriations for the 2011-12 year. The carbon tax does not start until after that year has been concluded. A discussion about the impacts of the carbon tax cannot be relevant to the debate before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! I take the point from the member for Waterford. Just bear that in mind when making your comments, please, member for Cleveland.

Dr ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. While the minister was willing to talk about the next 20 years and his Bruce Highway master plan, he would not talk about the next few years of the impact of the carbon tax. The government is clearly in denial about the indisputable facts that Labor's carbon tax will drive up the cost of the construction of roads. It will drive up the cost of roads—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Cleveland, just be careful.

Dr ROBINSON: This Bruce Highway master plan is already in tatters. Until the government identifies which projects will be part of the five per cent cut, every project is in doubt, including projects around the minister's own electorate of Thuringowa and projects in the electorate of Ashgrove. All of those road projects are now in doubt. Also a lot of marine infrastructure spend is now in doubt.