



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Transport and Public Works Committee, Report

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (12.43 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the estimates report of the Transport and Public Works Committee. I want to add to the comments from the member for Hervey Bay and also the line of questioning from the member for Chatsworth during the estimates process when concerns were raised about the Queensland Audit Office report into the backlog of some \$9 billion of road maintenance spending. I note that when the director-general, Mr Scales, was questioned about this particular issue, basically the response was, 'There's nothing to worry about here—nothing to see here. Aside from the fact that some costs have gone up, we think that the Audit Office report is a little inflated in terms of the rising costs in road safety measures around road construction and the rising cost of bitumen has been overstated at 30 per cent.' There were a number of excuses raised.

I thought the purler was the comment: 'It is all going to be okay because 695 kilometres of roads have been removed from the program.' Minister, I do not know if this is a classic three cups and balls magic trick, but I would like to know where those 695 kilometres have gone. Have they just disappeared or is it the case that we are not going to maintain them anymore? Is this a classic case of we have declassified them so they are no longer state roads—they are now council roads—and we are going to cost-shift the burden of that road maintenance to councils? That is what we saw previous Labor governments do to councils with respect to headworks charges. They removed all of the grants and subsidies for water and sewerage and council controlled roads and they gave council special powers to create the infrastructure charges evolution project, which was code for 'We're going to keep wasting Queenslanders' money on other things that we want to do as a state government and we are going to give council power to raise more taxes and increase the cost of housing and the delivery of public infrastructure at a council level.' This budget shows that the Labor government here in Queensland has no idea about financial control.

The other question I would have asked at estimates had I had the opportunity is that, with all of these extra public servants that we have seen employed in the last few years—some 30,000 I believe—why haven't we employed more people within the Department of Transport and Main Roads and put more people on those road crews to do something about this backlog of road maintenance?

Mr Pegg interjected.

Mr MOLHOEK: My question to the minister then would be—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the chair, member for Southport. We do not ask direct questions.

Mr MOLHOEK: I can only imagine, but I would like to know how many extra employees there are who are directly involved in road maintenance across Queensland. I would still like to know what has happened to the other 695 kilometres of road. Is that something that has been moved over to councils and is now their responsibility?

The other thing that concerned me about the estimates report is that there were no real answers on the future of the Coomera Connector road, the second M1, in spite of the fact that all we have seen in the media for weeks and months now are concerns expressed about the rising cost of congestion in South-East Queensland and the impact that that is having on small business and the impact that it is having on families and their quality of life. I find it particularly concerning that the Labor Party love to boast about the fact that they are there for the workers, that they are there for the battlers, but what are they doing for the thousands of tradies who are having to get up at four every morning and commute across the south-east to get to work? What are they doing to reduce the burden of stress on their lives and improve their quality of life?

This budget and this minister, like so many of the drones on that side of the House in the Queensland government cabinet, are letting Queenslanders down. They are not really addressing the serious issues. What we see is weak leadership from Premier Palaszczuk and no real commitment to improving road congestion in South-East Queensland.