

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Infrastructure

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (8.30 p.m.)—I rise to grieve for the people of Coomera and Upper Coomera in regard to the lack of road infrastructure and future planning for the Foxwell Road interchange in the electorate of Fadden. Fadden is the fastest growing electorate in the nation. The electorate includes the suburbs of Coomera, Upper Coomera, Pimpama and Ormeau, which especially exploded in population between the 2001 and 2006 censuses. There are currently six schools, with plans for a seventh, within a five-kilometre radius of the Foxwell Road interchange: Assisi Catholic College, Coomera Anglican College, Saint Stephen's College, Coomera Springs State School, Coomera State School and Upper Coomera State College. The road is also used by residents in the community to access the M1, and by the tourist trade, as it is the designated exit to the world-renowned Dreamworld. I raise this issue as members of the Coomera Anglican College and Saint Stephen's College parents and friends associations will meet this week to discuss the Foxwell Road interchange.

The Foxwell Road interchange and the M1 are the primary responsibility of the Queensland Bligh Labor government. According to Minister Keech in an email on 19 June, the state Labor government in the 2008-09 budget has allocated a minuscule \$5.26 million—of which \$2 million is joint federal-state money from the last state budget—to this interchange as part of a total project cost of, apparently, \$22 million. On the surface there appears to be a glimmer of hope that the parents and residents of the local community will get something they are looking for. Unfortunately, I have here the Department of Main Roads' Road Implementation Program through to 2012 for the south coast hinterland and, whilst Main Roads have allocated a minuscule amount of funding within the budget to infrastructure needs, it has only been allocated to concept planning. There are no other funds actually in the implementation program cognisant of the government's pledge of \$22 million for some time after 2008. When asked about the timing, the same state minister replied, through her media adviser, that indeed it would be 'some date after 2008'. This has left parents, residents and the community completely in the dark. The community are unable to extract a specific time frame for when a very serious problem, a confluence of traffic from six and soon seven schools as well as residents moving on the M1 and tourists going to Dreamworld, will be addressed.

If we take an almost identical interchange 16 kilometres south in the electorate of Moncrieff, the Niensens Road interchange, concept planning of this interchange initially began in 2002. Over six years, the Labor state member for Mudgeeraba touted that construction would begin, you guessed it, 'soon'. Over that period of six years, all the state government did was demolish four houses in preparation. In February 2008, only four months ago, construction—hallelujah!—finally began on the upgrade. It was only through the hard work and persistence of community members like Ros Bates—and I acknowledge the federal member for Moncrieff, Steve Ciobo, for his hard work—that a date for construction was set. The community at this interchange will have to wait until August 2009 for the Niensens upgrade to be completed, presuming the project runs to schedule. That is nine long years—nine years of queueing down the M1, nine years of congested roundabouts and nine years of frustration for a local community with a Labor state government.

The community in Coomera, in my electorate, is already at this point, and the concept-planning stage is due to start 'sometime after 2008', according to the state member's office. If Main Roads starts concept planning in 2008, the best the

local community can look forward to is completion by 2017, if the progress of the Niensens Road interchange is any indication what the Labor state government is capable—or should I say ‘incapable’—of. Currently, parents who live on Foxwell Road and who make the journey across the highway overpass to drop their children at school must plan for a one hour trip. This is a trip that, without congestion, takes no longer than 10 minutes. The Foxwell Road interchange consists of the Foxwell Road off ramp on the southbound side of the M1 and Days Road off ramp on the northbound side. These roads are both connected by a highway overpass. Both roads are connected to roundabouts, and these roundabouts are fed by traffic from the M1. To add complication to the present situation, a service station centre feeds its exiting traffic to merge on the M1 off ramp. It is very much a case of: the M1 is connected to Foxwell Road; Foxwell Road is connected to the overpass; the overpass is connected to another roundabout; the roundabout is connected to six schools; six schools are connected to Days Road; and Days Road is connected to the M1. You can all sing along if you like—except there is nothing funny about the absolutely parlous state that the Labor state government has left Fadden in. Unfortunately, in the not-too-distant future, one could conceive of two or more cars being connected in a horrific accident if the present situation is not rectified.

As I mentioned, six schools are presently fed from this interchange. Five of these schools have five-year growth projections: Assisi Catholic College, which currently has 700 enrolled students, will have an estimated 1,600 students by 2013; Coomera Anglican College, whose current population is 1,120, is estimated to have 1,300 by 2013; St Stephen’s College, which currently has 1,228 students, is estimated to have 1,500 by 2013; Coomera Springs, which currently has 200 students, is estimated to have 1,150 by 2013; and Coomera State School, which is currently at capacity with 860 students, but will grow by approximately 100 students each year and with minimum funding, estimates that it will have over 950 students by 2013. That means that, on any given day, there are up to 4,100 students currently attending schools that feed from the Foxwell Road interchange. Over 4,000 children are trying to arrive and leave the same area at precisely the same time. These two roads are the only main roads the parents from these six schools can use to drop off and collect their kids. On any given day, the northbound off ramp that leads to Days Road is fully congested, leaving parents stranded and queuing—often at a complete standstill—down a 110 kilometres-per-hour lane of the M1.

This congestion clearly creates a chain reaction. Most of the parents who use the southbound exit and Foxwell Road must cross the overpass to reach their destination. The overpass then becomes congested, forcing traffic to a standstill at the Foxwell Road roundabout. This in turn prevents traffic from the southbound exit from entering the roundabout. As a result, there are parents queuing down both the northbound and southbound lanes of the 110-kilometres-per-hour M1 motorway. In 2013, there will be over 7½ thousand students attending the abovementioned schools. That is 7½ thousand students arriving in the area between 8 am and 9 am every weekday and 7½ thousand students trying to exit between 3 pm and 3.20 pm. What is farcical is that there are plans to build 60,000 homes at the end of Foxwell Road—as if there is not enough congestion already! Let’s throw 60,000 more homes, more cars, more people and another school into the mix and wonder why we have a continuing problem.

Last year I had the pleasure of standing with the then Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile as he announced \$455 million in federal road funding for the M1 from Niensens Road, Nerang to Stewart Road, Ormeau. The Foxwell Road interchange would fall between elements of that stretch of road. I have recently learnt that

the \$455 million of federal funding, which was dedicated to road projects in the region by the previous coalition government, and which was fought so hard for by the members for Moncrieff and McPherson, has been dumped by the current Labor government—surprise, surprise. Instead, the Labor government has reallocated the funding to be spent between Logan and Springwood. Could that area possibly be in Labor seats? It is an area that falls outside the fastest growing electorate in the nation—Fadden.

I am calling on the Bligh and the Rudd Labor governments to honour the original funding of \$455 million to the community and to allocate money to fix the Foxwell Road interchange now. The state government needs to act now in order to complete the necessary planning and start the project in a time frame that will minimise not only the impact on the local community in years to come but also the potential for major traffic accidents and possible loss of life. By 2013, the Foxwell Road interchange will be used by 60,000 homes, a planned shopping centre, commuters for the local train station and over 7,000 schoolchildren—all on one road interchange. The funding will provide a four-lane overpass and restructure the existing roundabouts to accommodate the extra lanes and the looming expectation of increased traffic. In addition to this, it will provide a solution to the issue of traffic exiting from the service station located in heart of the problem area. It is the fastest growing region of Australia. It needs action now.