



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Infrastructure

SPEECH

Monday, 29 July 2019

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP

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Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (12:32): I'm delighted to speak on all topics, but it's infrastructure which I'm excited about. I'm sorry that the member for Scullin is hurrying back to his office to hear this speech on his television because I'll address some of his unkind comments as we go. We do know that this government has the economy right and that's where it starts—AAA credit rating, back in surplus, faster growth than any of the OECD bar the United States. The importance of an economy, as the Prime Minister often reminds us, is it is the enabler, the means by which we can provide vital public services and also build infrastructure, and a \$100 billion infrastructure package is what this government is looking at.

The previous speaker, the member for Scullin, obviously is not aware that the government actually has put responsibility for population growth, cities and urban infrastructure into a single portfolio—a clear indication that this government gets it when it comes to where the pressure comes from on infrastructure, particularly in our major cities and our major regions. The challenge for all of us who serve the people in this place is to try to ensure that infrastructure keeps ahead of, or at least catches up with, the population curve. You can only do that if you've got the money to do it. You can only do that with a strong economy, which is why we are so unashamedly proud of our performance when it comes to delivering a strong economy. The stronger the economy is, the more infrastructure you can build.

Unfortunately, the member for Scullin also mentioned the Cross River Rail project in Brisbane, almost as an example, he was saying, where the government has not looked at business cases. To the contrary, that business case was given to Infrastructure Australia by the Queensland Labor government. Infrastructure Australia agreed that it looked like a good project but said that it wasn't needed now. It had some question marks around the timing—there was more scale required coming into that rail system in Brisbane before its time was there. Still to this day, despite years having gone by, Infrastructure Australia is waiting for the Queensland Labor government to resubmit a business case. Yet you have Labor Party members in this House coming into this chamber suggesting the government isn't looking at business cases. Well, there is a business case for rail in South East Queensland and that is the Beerburrum to Nambour business case—\$780 million. For the first time in our history a federal government has committed funds for that stretch of rail. \$390 million—50 per cent of that \$780 million spent—was committed by the coalition government. That was a project prioritised by Infrastructure Australia that had a business case submitted by the state government and accepted, and for the first time we fund 50 per cent. Has it started, though? No, it hasn't. Why? Because we still wait for the state Labor government in Queensland to start doing some work. Traditionally they pay 100 per cent. Now they pay 50 per cent. That's a 50 per cent discount, and they still will not start work.

We had \$10 billion on the Bruce Highway throughout Queensland. That's not just about transport. It's not just about flood mitigation. It's not just about congestion. It's not just about safety measures. It is about getting people home. It's about you and I and other people in this House getting home safely to our families and spending less time in traffic and more with our loved ones. It's about ensuring that our small and medium-sized businesses are more productive and their costs are kept low. These are the outcomes around the social fabric of our communities, and around the strength and productivity of our economy, that good infrastructure investment delivers. I'm very proud to be part of a government that is delivering aptly in that regard.

The **DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Vamvakinou): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.