



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Scoresby Freeway

SPEECH

Monday, 2 June 2003

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Billson, Bruce, MP

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Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (4.28 pm)—I wholeheartedly support this motion and I am appalled that my adjoining colleague chose to talk about something other than the most significant infrastructure issue facing the community that we represent. The Scoresby Freeway was a promise—a promise made in good faith, one had hoped, by the Bracks government, but as time has gone by we have found that it was not made in good faith at all. Unlike what the member for Isaacs tried to suggest, the same crowd that were in government before the election were in government after the election. If anybody was to know about the state of finances of Victoria it was them. They were there; they were not deceived like the Howard government was when Minister Beazley in the former Keating government said before the 1996 federal election that the budget was in surplus—and it was \$10½ million in deficit. There were not challenges like that. This was grief all of their own making.

The people that were guiding the Victorian government were the same people before and after, so it is arrant nonsense to suggest that there is any sort of comparison to be made there. They stooged the voters of the southern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne and then had the gall to promise several hundred million dollars more for a bypass ring-road around Geelong. So bereft were they of a commitment to the Scoresby Freeway that they junked that, trashed their no tolls promise and then went off and promised to spend money somewhere else. It is an appalling example of how the people of the eastern and south-eastern suburbs have been let down by Labor. The ALP have recklessly played with the future of our community and its citizens, displayed a breathtaking indifference to their aspirations and traded on the hopes of ordinary people, their communities and their trust, for the grubbiest of short-term political gains. Labor lied. This much is uncontested by anybody. Labor lied, and they have disadvantaged our community because of it.

There is no single endeavour that will enhance the viability, vitality and living standards of our region more than this project. Let me remind people why Scoresby matters and why a toll-free Scoresby is the way to go forward. The Scoresby corridor contains up to one-third of the population of metropolitan Melbourne. Up to 50 per cent of Melbourne's manufacturing and production activity is located in the Scoresby corridor, producing a major source of exports for Australia and an annual turnover of \$35 billion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. I.R. Causley)—Would the member for Dunkley remove the sign that he is holding?

Mr BILLSON—Certainly. The project, when factored into a general equilibrium model of the Victorian economy, is estimated to boost GDP by \$400 million per year and add 0.3 per cent to Victoria's rate of growth. It links the centres of Frankston, Dandenong, Knox and Ringwood. Why does that matter? It matters for a range of reasons. For the community that I represent—and, in fact, in the area represented by the member for Isaacs—there are 450 hectares of vacant industrial and commercially zoned land waiting to be developed. That land is waiting for investors: why don't they come? They do not come because the transport network is cactus. It is not up to it, and they go and invest elsewhere, disadvantaging our community and leaving that land just sitting there vacant. We are crying out for some decent links to ports, airports and interstate highways. The picture is clear, it is plain and it is simple for everybody to see. Three-quarters of all tourists coming to Greater Frankston and to the Mornington Peninsula come from the Scoresby catchment. It is a project that all the councillors had road trains up to Canberra talking about, all saying, 'Feds, where is your money?' We put \$445 million in real money on the table, while we heard about fake promises and spin doctoring from the ALP. I said, 'I am not convinced that the ALP in Victoria are committed to this project.' Didn't we say that they were behaving as reluctant converts? They have done that ever since it occurred.

Let us talk about this great revelation that all of a sudden there is a problem here. Back on 7 July 2000, state and federal Labor Party members of parliament were briefed on Scoresby. They were not only briefed on Scoresby; they then had the Macquarie Bank in a few hours later to talk about it. This occurred on 7 July 2000. We have already heard reports about Transurban being approached by the Labor government in Victoria to see if they would cop a toll on Scoresby. We have heard about how the RACV was approached. This is a stooge that was a number of years in the making, and it is just unbelievable that the Labor Party could say that it is anything

different. They were told back on 7 July 2000 that, if you tolled the Scoresby Freeway, the net economic benefits would be neutral or negative.

It is forecast that 55 per cent of the Scoresby traffic will not use the freeway if there is a direct toll. That was the advice given to the state and federal members of the Labor Party, but they still went ahead. Why do they hate our people in this part of the world? Do they know that more than 55 per cent of our people are from two-car families, because they need cars to get to school and educational institutions and to leisure activities? Why do they so hate the residents of the south-east and the eastern suburbs of Melbourne where 80 per cent of travel undertaken by women is in cars? What is wrong with women in cars? The ALP hate our community. They have let them down appallingly, and they knew what they were doing. They got the advice from respected transport economists, they understood the implications of tolling Scoresby and they went around betraying the electorate. They lied and got elected on the back of an electoral fraud.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for Dunkley will withdraw that comment. You cannot use the word 'lied'.

Mr BILLSON—I have used the word 'lied' with regard to Scoresby about five times, and no-one has contested it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—Not while I have been in the chair.

Mr BILLSON—My apologies. I withdraw the comment that the state government lied. Everyone knows what happened.