

Edited speech to Brisbane City Council – Tuesday 18th August 2009

Hale St Bridge

Deputy Chairman: Thank you. Further debate; Councillor FLESSER.

Councillor FLESSER: Thank you, Madam Chair; yes, I would like to talk about item A, Hale Street Link update. I remember watching TV not that long ago, the Channel 7 news, and there was Gary Fites, representative from the RACQ, talking about the Hale Street Bridge, and I see Councillor QUIRK smiling or grimacing. He said, 'We believe this bridge is going to cause more problems than it's going to solve.'

Well, Gary Fites is absolutely correct. Fifty minutes delays for eastbound traffic, Coronation Drive, up to 40 minutes on Milton Road, up to 30 minutes delays for westbound traffic on Riverside Expressway, these delays, even though it is during the construction period, are just not acceptable. They are just not acceptable. Motorists will be angry and they deserve to be angry when this is forced upon them.

Councillor SUTTON talked about the dodgy figures for the traffic projections. I believe they are very, very dodgy as well. Yes, during the committee presentation, it was interesting that nobody from the Administration could actually work out where these extra vehicles are coming from.

So let us just clarify what the issue is here. We know that the business case for the Hale Street Link, developed by this Administration, says that at the end of the first year of operation of the Hale Street Bridge, there will be 19,000 vehicles a day using it, and that will be increased to over 20,000 trips per day in 2021.

Let us just look at that. At the end of the first 12 months of operation, 19,000 vehicles a day. But in the presentation we received last Tuesday, it said in the report that there is going to be network benefits in volume reduction in 2012 that are currently estimated to be, for the William Jolly Bridge, a 21 per cent reduction.

The William Jolly Bridge is the bridge that carries the vehicles from one side of the river to the other in the current location. That bridge is going to carry 21 per cent less traffic in 2011. We also know that the William Jolly Bridge carries about 45,000 cars a day, so that means that, of the 45,000 cars a day currently using that bridge, 9,450 of them will start using the Hale Street Bridge—9,450!

That is less than half the 19,000 that the business case was relying on using this bridge at the end of the first 12 months of operation.

So, where exactly are these extra 10,000 vehicles a day coming from? Where are they coming from? That was the question during the committee presentation. It was not answered. It appears it is not going to be answered today, either, because do you know why? There is no answer!

That is why these figures are absolutely dodgy.

How does this affect the ratepayers? This absolutely affects ratepayers' hip pockets. The business case for the Hale Street Bridge—and this is when it was only going to cost \$240 million, not the \$370 million it's up to now. The LORD MAYOR refused to redo the business case when the cost blew out, so all we can go by is the business case when it was going to cost \$240 million, which was going to be repaid by motorists.

It was going to be repaid by motorists through tolls at the projected traffic volume.

So, if the traffic volumes do not meet those expectations, do you know who is going to be paying for it? Ratepayers are going to be paying through the hip pocket, paying for the poor mismanagement of this project. If we go back in history, where did this bridge come from? It was not designed by experts looking at traffic projections across Brisbane, working out where the best place was for Council to spend \$370 million.

No, Madam Chair, this location was thought up in the mind of Campbell NEWMAN when he was a candidate. He became LORD MAYOR and he decided that he had to produce the Hale Street tunnel even though the tunnel turned into a bridge, but gung ho into this, \$370 million later, dodgy traffic projections, RACQ saying that the bridge is going to cause more problems that it is going to solve, here we are today, about 12 months out from when it is going to be finished.

I make a prediction: I predict that, at the end of the first 12 months of the Hale Street Bridge, there will not be anywhere near 19,000 vehicles a day using it, and it is going to be the ratepayers of Brisbane who are going to be paying through the hip pocket because of the poor mismanagement of this project.