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IPSWICH MOTORWAY: CRUNCH TIME FOR THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT

Member for Ipswich Rachel Nolan today warned that John Howard's government was preparing the ground to walk away from its responsibility to upgrade the Ipswich Motorway.

"In recent weeks we have seen the junior Federal Roads Minister, Ian Campbell making a range of uninformed noises about roads in South East Queensland," Ms Nolan said.

"While it might all sound very strategic to be talking about traffic audits, ring roads and long term plans, there is no doubt all this talk is simply the Howard government testing the waters before walking away from the obligation to fund the Ipswich Motorway.

"As part of the National Highway, the Ipswich Motorway is a federal responsibility and has been for decades.

"For the Howard Government to walk away from the Ipswich Motorway is for them to walk away from the people of Ipswich and South East Queensland.

"And that is a move for which they will pay.

"It's all very well for the Howard Government to sit back in Canberra and think they are playing a clever political game but people are dying on this road, livelihoods are suffering and the community of Ipswich is being strangled.

"Last week, tragically, the sixth person died on the road since 1999. The economic cost has topped \$5 million in the last six months."

Ms Nolan said it was fast approaching crunch time for the Howard Government to fix the Motorway. This Government simply has the wrong priorities. It can spend billions on war in Iraq and it can pork barrel canefarmers but it refuses to fix one of Australia's worst stretches of road.

"The Howard government should have fixed the Ipswich Motorway five years ago. With the federal Budget due to be handed down next week, it must do it now."