



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Friday, 11 June 2010

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (10.52 am): I rise to speak on the government's budget handed down by the Treasurer on Tuesday, 8 June. First, let me congratulate the opposition leader, John-Paul Langbroek, and shadow Treasurer, Tim Nicholls, for their budget reply speeches, and I commend them to the public.

In my 2009 budget reply speech I noted that the government had in recent years surfed the revenue waves of the GST, mining royalties, the swathe of stamp duties from a buoyant housing market and other sources. I noted that, despite record levels of revenue, somehow the government was able to turn riches into ruin for the state's economy before the words 'global financial crisis' entered the public lexicon. I noted then that the government allowed growth in expenditure to exceed growth in revenue. Further, the government allowed a massive \$65 billion to accumulate before the GFC. The Bligh-Fraser brand of economic mismanagement is unsustainable, and always has been, and the global financial crisis accentuated what was already a major problem. Yet still to this day the government tries to hide behind the global financial crisis to escape accountability for its actions.

As we turn our attention to the 2010-11 Labor state budget, what we see is more of the same. The budget is a typical Labor budget, with high debt levels, ongoing deficits, a big spend which is likely to be full of waste, and new and higher taxes on Queenslanders. The 2010-11 budget is also a miserly, mean-spirited one. The cost of living has skyrocketed due to Labor's fuel tax, electricity price hike, car registration increases, boat and trailer registration increases, higher road tolls, hikes in public transport fares, water price rises, licence cost increases and the list goes on. The members opposite do not appreciate this accountability. After the massive hikes in the cost of living under Labor, the relief offered by this government is a paltry \$24 a year cut in CTP insurance.

But let us pause a while and consider this major \$24 CTP cut. It is actually much smaller mercies than presented by the Treasurer. The \$24 CTP saving may not actually be a saving, as motor vehicle dealers will likely increase the cost of services in other areas or simply build the \$24 into the sale price of a car. So in that case there is no saving at all. Then there are the insurance brokers who provide a full service offering, including CTP, to their clients and rely on this income stream to employ staff and run their business—so jobs and business viability are threatened. Also, many charitable, not-for-profit and sporting organisations get commissions for CTP for vehicles owned by their members and supporters.

Just recently I attended a Scripture Union chaplaincy dinner at the Redlands Sporting Club at Wellington Point. At that dinner, I and many others signed up to the CTP insurance plan so that the commissions would go to supporting the fine work that our chaplains do with our children in schools. It is bad enough that Scripture Union Queensland, the provider of chaplains for schools in Queensland, does not receive sufficient support from the state government and as such struggles to underwrite the provision of chaplaincy services. And now one of its funding streams will be cut by this heartless government, putting at risk the provision of some chaplaincy services. I ask the Treasurer to rethink Labor's rushed and unfair CTP policy and why the exempt charities will somehow compensate them for their loss. Upon further

consideration, it is clear that this 2010-11 budget is a miserly, mean-spirited one that does nothing to relieve the real cost of living pressures that Queenslanders have been subjected to by this Labor government.

I am sure we have all seen the recent ANZ bank TV ads that feature the character 'Barbara from bank world'. In the ads Barbara cheats and deceives her customers, treating them with absolute contempt, and cares little for their needs. In one ad, a customer fronts up to Barbara's bank to ask why they are being charged monthly account keeping fees. The customer explains that they originally signed up for an everyday account for which they were promised had no account keeping fees. Barbara explains to the bewildered customer that 'no account keeping fees' meant know with a 'k' in that she would not know about the fees until after they had been charged. The customer says she would never have opened an account at the bank if she had known about the account keeping fees in advance. And when a customer asks to see the manager because they are angry about the bad customer service, Barbara, the manager from bank world, does not want to know about the problem and will not fix it. In another ad, a very good customer at bank world approaches Barbara to collect a promised prize as part of a loyalty program only to find that Barbara would not keep her promise. The customer was misled and their loyalty was worth nothing to Barbara.

Can I suggest today that there is one among us in this parliament who is worse than Barbara from bank world and that is 'Anna from Bligh world'. Let me repeat that just in case members opposite missed it—'Anna from Bligh world'. There are striking similarities between Barbara and this Queensland Premier. Between the two worlds they have created—bank world and Bligh world—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Would the member for Cleveland address members by their proper title?

Dr ROBINSON: Like Barbara, this Premier is mean-spirited in the way she has driven up the costs of living. Like Barbara, this Premier has been deceptive in the way she introduced a fuel tax without the consent of the people. Like Barbara, this Premier does not regard loyalty—just ask workers who were deceived about her asset sales program. Like Barbara, this Premier does not keep her promises. Her commitment to create 100,000 new bread-winning jobs is an empty promise, a cruel hoax, as the net job numbers are actually going backwards. And anything else in this budget is as tentative as receiving a kettle from Barbara in bank world. Bligh world is not a happy place. Bligh world is a place where Queenslanders wish they had not gone. Bligh world is a place that Queenslanders are desperately trying to leave. Perhaps the tax hungry Treasurer should consider a congestion tax on working families as they walk away from Labor.

This budget sees the continuation of a pattern of budget deficits—the fourth, in fact. It continues to see the growth of state debt to the most unimaginable levels of the Hawke and Keating era. It took the Howard government almost a decade to pay off that Labor debt across the entire nation, but they had a debt repayment plan and they stuck to it. This government has nothing of the sort. It is quite happy to keep spending the hard-earned money of Queenslanders without so much as a thought as to how all of this borrowed money will be paid back. Nobody believes the Treasurer's throwaway line that he will be able to bring the budget back into surplus.

Things are so bad that even New South Wales—which until recently was the basket case of the Australian states in terms of economies—has said in its 2010-11 budget that it will bring its budget back into surplus. But Queenslanders will have to wait for an LNP government before this Labor debt will be paid off. This state, once the envy of the nation, is now the embodiment of the banana republic. We are \$83.5 billion in debt, which is over \$18,000 for every man, woman and child. It is more than twice the peak state debt of Victoria. It is a situation born of this government's absolute refusal to rein in its extreme and unsustainable levels of spending, particularly its refusal to curb public sector expansion.

The Treasurer has tried to claim debt is coming down, but his own budget papers confirm the opposite. Debt continues to rise to record levels of \$83.5 billion. This high level of debt is like a ball and chain around the legs of every Queensland and a millstone around the neck of the Queensland economy.

While the rest of the country rebounds into economic recovery, this Labor government is retarding our go-forward. One of the biggest retardants to our recovery is the government's loss of Queensland's AAA credit rating. The downgrading of our credit rating was brought about by the high debt level and out of control expenditure of this Labor government. The loss of our AAA rating has resulted in an increase in interest of in excess of \$1 billion. What could be done with this money? This is an incredible waste of money. This budget does nothing to recover our AAA rating. Again, it will take an LNP government that is committed to paying back debt and controlling expenditure to do it.

This time last year those opposite stood condemned by the union backers and Queenslanders at large for betraying the trust placed in them as the government. They introduced a fuel tax, increased rego

costs and announced the biggest sell-off of income-generating assets in Queensland's history. One year on, despite the Premier's best efforts to sell the sell-off, even with the help of taxpayer funded advertising campaigns, 85 per cent of Queenslanders maintain the rage. They are not convinced of the imminent need to sell these particular publicly owned assets at this time and in a fire sale, and neither should they be.

The government's record on privatisation and deregulation is appalling. I, of course, refer to the failed deregulation of the Queensland electricity industry, with families across the state now facing the third double-digit rise in electricity prices in as many years. This, of course, comes after the government swore black and blue that, under a deregulated electricity market, Queenslanders would pay no more for power to their homes. So if the government botched the privatisation of energy, why would anyone believe they could successfully privatise ports, rail assets and motorways? It beggars belief.

My own electorate of Cleveland is suffering the consequences of the government's mishandling of the state's economy. If not for Bligh Labor's economic mismanagement, more funds would have been available for new major projects in Cleveland. Instead, very little return of taxpayer money will take place to my electorate as part of this budget. There is less available for building local infrastructure, improving transport links and supporting small business. Urgently needed local infrastructure has been overlooked, underfunded or scrapped. The lack of good transport infrastructure is a huge bugbear in my electorate. The Redlands currently relies very heavily on our single-track rail line for public transport. The duplication of the Manly-Cleveland line is badly needed. Still there is no commitment in sight from this government.

What is the government doing in the meantime to address the paucity of transport connections to Brisbane city in the Redlands? It is building the Eastern Busway. It is planned to run a dedicated busway link from the city through Buranda, Coorparoo and Carindale to eventually terminate at Capalaba. This is a vital piece of public transport infrastructure and one that my constituents would be thankful for, if stage 3 somehow could be brought forward sometime earlier than 2026. Now more than ever, Queensland needs to prioritise public transport, given this state has become the most expensive in the Commonwealth in which to own and operate a motor vehicle. RACQ spokesman Gary Fites told the *Courier-Mail* on 4 June—

On top of the double whammy of scrapping the fuel subsidy and increased vehicle registration fees, motorists are increasingly being asked to put their hands in their pockets to pay for such things as the new smart drivers licence and tolls on roads, bridges and tunnels.

It is an especially cruel irony that, while Queensland motorists are paying on average \$220 more this year to stay on the road, the government has cut Main Roads and Transport spending by a quarter of a billion dollars. Motorists are being gouged out of existence while seeing an ever-diminishing return in road infrastructure.

In my electorate, the signalisation of Shore and Wellington streets once again appears to have been totally ignored, as have park-and-ride upgrades for Cleveland and Wellington Point stations. I call on the government to honour its promise at the last election to the people of Birkdale in my electorate of an extra 50 net parking spaces at the Birkdale station. The current plan that the government has is to break this promise and provide only 28 new spaces.

Mr Nicholls: Is anyone surprised?

Dr ROBINSON: It is no surprise at all. Cleveland by and large is a relatively safe place to live, work and raise a family. However, like elsewhere in Brisbane, it does have its areas that need a boost in police presence. Some parts of the northern Redlands have been identified by locals and the police as areas needing further focus, whether for car hooning, vandalism, graffiti, burglary or other crimes. These problems and others could be somewhat remediated with the establishment of a QPS shopfront at the Wellington Point town centre with its own police officers.

One disappointment in this budget is that there is no recurrent funding for the Bayside Domestic Violence Initiative. The government thus far has refused to fund the Cleveland court's only domestic violence support group, meaning that this week it is forced to spend the little money it has remaining to advertise in the local papers that it will be closing its doors. Victims of domestic violence in the Redlands who present at the Cleveland court will have no support from 30 June. This is a disgrace.

Not only has this budget withheld funding from such needy groups in my electorate, but the government recently decided to actively take money from worthy community programs to prop up its own failing schemes. This was the case when the government raided the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to the tune of \$10 million in May. The GCBF is a vital source of funding for charities, disability groups, sporting groups and other not-for-profit community groups in my electorate. Whoever came up with this idea is seriously twisted. They are like the low-life people who raid charity bins, stealing the clothes and other items that were meant for charities.

Can the Treasurer tell me which of the worthy recipients of the community benefit fund in my electorate who recently received funding should miss out? What about the Redland District Special School in Thornlands, a fantastic school for disabled children that is underresourced, that received special needs walkers and chairs? Or perhaps the Panda Playgroup at Birkdale could have done without the new playground equipment for the children?

Last month the health minister came out to Redland Hospital in my electorate. He was there to announce that three new nurse practitioners had started work at the hospital. The only problem was that the nurses had already started work in June 2009, a full year ago, so it was a typical Labor recycled announcement with the pretence of being something new—like some of the current budget items. While at the hospital, the health minister was challenged about his apparent reprioritising of a \$640,000 election promise to build a helipad at the hospital. I surely hope he is going to keep that promise and further honour the other elements of the emergency department upgrade. His vacillating on the helipad casts a shadow of doubt on the other promises.

The Redland Hospital is in urgent need of investment in supportive infrastructure to increase car parking spaces and to build the northern ring-road around the hospital precinct. Anyone who has visited the hospital can attest to the parlous state of the current car park. Illegal parking on verges and embankments and double parking has become commonplace because the demand for spaces has outstripped supply by several times. The health minister himself made a tacit acknowledgement of the situation during his visit when he flat out refused to be photographed in front of the car park—he was that ashamed of it. The Redland Hospital does not need the health minister's platitudes; it needs his action. This government also does not appear to have addressed the need for a palliative care unit at Redland Hospital. The government has failed to listen to the growing number of locals calling for a dedicated unit.

Positive environmental outcomes are important to the people of the Redlands. As a marine science graduate, I have a high level of interest in how the government's marine and fisheries policies affect my bayside electorate. Before the last election, the government promised to build six artificial reefs within the three-year election period. Currently, only one—really only half; it is not a new one—has been established, Harry Atkinson Reef. It was a memorable episode last September when the sustainability minister went against all common sense and maritime services advice and sent the *Tiwi Pearl* ahead of schedule into a storm to avoid boaties and fishers in Manly who were planning to challenge the government about its anti-fishing policies. The storm that the minister sent the *Tiwi Pearl* into caused it to sink ahead of time in a fiasco and drift to an unintended location.

For some time the minister could not even find her new reef. On one hand it was very entertaining to watch this amateur minister pretend to boaties and recreational fishers that she knew what she was doing, but, on the other hand, boaties and fishers took it seriously that the minister really believes that the government's artificial reef program, if and when it is complete, is fair compensation to them for the loss of 70 to 80 per cent of the best fishing areas of the bay as green zones.

Regarding the other five artificial reefs, while I cannot find any direct funding commitment in the budget papers for the continuation of the artificial reef program, I hope the minister will stay true to her word and establish these reefs before the next election. The boaties and anglers of bayside Brisbane are watching. They will not accept any excuses from this minister, whom they are already wary of. The minister has earned a reputation among fishermen as the landlubbing greenie with no idea of the needs of the bay and those who use it.

Who knows what extreme green solutions will come about for the bay during the next election campaign, when the Premier—if she is still Premier—will be even more desperate for the Green preferences that she cannot beat the LNP without. We need Moreton Bay to be sustainable for future generations, but the way Labor has gone about securing these outcomes is wrong. The LNP will pursue conservation based on hard scientific evidence, not greasy, under-the-table preference deals with fringe parties before election time. I will continue to advocate for a comprehensive marine fishery study to be conducted in Moreton Bay.

What about Straddie? North Stradbroke Island is a place of fantastic and natural beauty and home to a significant population and good number of plant and animal species that are unique to the area. In particular, there is a native population of koalas that do not have the same level of disease as other koala populations, thankfully. More research needs to be conducted about this unique koala population.

Then there is a range of other areas of research in terms of the environment that are needed in my electorate. There is also the need for a national park, which I continue to call for, for North Stradbroke Island. The government has been high on the rhetoric and talk and low on the delivery with this long-awaited national park.

In closing, I think back to Barbara from Bank World. Whatever happened to the customer who was conned? Well, she leaves Bank World and enters another world, a better world. Ultimately, it is only by leaving 'Bligh World' behind that things will get better for Queensland. Only by leaving 'Bligh World' will things get better.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Powell): Order! The member has been asked to refer to ministers by their correct titles.

Dr ROBINSON: And the sooner the better.