



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL;
COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER LEVY REPEAL AND REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (8.46 pm): The 2011 budget handed down by the Queensland Treasurer is an extreme disappointment to the people of Cleveland and the broader Redlands and to Queenslanders in general. This budget would have to be one of the worst budgets ever brought down in Queensland, providing no hope for the future—only more debt, deficits and no effective relief to Labor's out-of-control cost of living. It is a budget that holds out with one hand but takes back much more with the other. At the outset I would like to congratulate the shadow Treasurer, Tim Nicholls, for his budget reply speech, and I commend it to the Queensland public for its analysis of this failed budget.

What we see in the 2011 state budget is more of the same from Labor. The budget is a typical Labor budget, with high debt levels and ongoing deficits. It is also a miserly, mean-spirited one. The cost of living has skyrocketed due to Labor's fuel tax, electricity price hikes, car registration increases, boat and trailer registration increases, hikes in public transport fares, water price rises and licence cost increases. After the massive hikes in the cost of living under Labor, the relief offered by this government is minimal.

After 20 long years Labor is still promising that good times are around the corner. This Labor government sent Queensland broke in the last boom. They squandered the rivers of gold and now with an election pending they ask to be trusted with the next boom as it comes. Their track record speaks loud and clear that they are incapable of managing the state's economy into the future and cannot be trusted with Queensland's recovery. Already we have seen that the Premier cannot even disburse flood appeal funds in a timely way to those Queenslanders who have suffered from the disasters. It has now been over 160 days since the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal was launched and victims are still waiting for payments. So how on earth will this government rebuild Queensland with that kind of approach?

This government has failed to manage the state's economy through difficult times. Its legacy is a record high \$85 billion debt forecasted which means an interest bill for Queensland taxpayers of \$5 billion a year, equating to \$100 million per week or \$595,000 per hour. Labor's projected high debt level was part of the reason this Treasurer lost Queenslanders our treasured and respected AAA credit rating. No other state government managed to drive their economy so low as to lose their AAA credit rating. Congratulations, Treasurer.

Further, we were promised by the Treasurer that if we took some pain in the form of Labor's asset sales program we would help pay down this debt and go some way towards getting our AAA credit rating back. Yet, in reality, despite the painful sell-off of assets and sell-out of Queensland's workers, the debt forecast has continued to spiral upwards. Where did the \$17 billion from the asset sales go? Further, the government is projecting a deficit of more than \$2 billion this year and a \$4 billion deficit in just over 12 months.

This is a budget that promises five per cent economic growth for 2012, significantly beyond what this government has delivered in the past. These very optimistic forecasts further undermine the credibility of this budget. The growth forecasts by the Treasurer are little better than an exercise in reading tea leaves. The Treasurer has repealed Labor's ambulance charge—a charge that should not have existed in the first place. We agree with the abolition of Labor's ambulance levy.

Motorists will receive no relief in this budget. The government has snubbed motorists by continuing to drive up the costs of car registration. Car registration costs have grown by 30 per cent in recent years under Labor with no sign of relief in this budget. Despite calls from the RACQ to freeze car rego and the commitment from the LNP to freeze registration on the family car during the first term of a Newman government, this government has failed to respond likewise and match our policy and commitment. Since 60 per cent of workers in the Cleveland electorate have to travel outside the Redlands for work every day, and mostly by car, the pain of Labor's continued increases to registration costs is multiplied.

Labor's ongoing bungling of water management and attempts to blame councils for this government's failures continue to be a sore spot among Redland residents. The LNP can-do Queensland's four-point plan for water reform will deliver savings to water bills, and I commend these reforms to the people of Cleveland, Redlands and Queensland in general. Our four-point plan will help families with Labor's rising cost of water. In relation to electricity prices, this government is responsible for out-of-control increases. The LNP in contrast will save Queenslanders money off their power bills.

Labor's record debt and projected deficits mean that every week \$100 million will be spent on interest payments instead of needed infrastructure and service delivery—road infrastructure, schools, police officers and hospital beds that would ensure a better standard of living for Queenslanders. As a result of this budget, families in my electorate face more financial pain from the rising cost of everyday living brought about by the ineptitude of this Labor government. Queensland's worst Treasurer has given my electorate and Queensland Australia's worst budget.

This budget of lost opportunities brings no hope to the many struggling families in areas of my electorate like Wellington Point, Cleveland, Thornlands, Ormiston, Birkdale and North Stradbroke Island. It gives no assistance to the development and improvements of Toondah Harbour, which is a major economic link to North Stradbroke Island. The complete failure to invest in an upgrade of marine infrastructure at Toondah Harbour shows that there will be no going forward with jobs growth in the Redlands and North Stradbroke Island under a Labor government. If this government were serious about the transition to a tourism based economy on North Stradbroke Island, the Toondah upgrade would be in this budget. This shows the government is not serious about a sustainable Stradbroke. It once again shows how Labor says one thing and turns around to do the complete opposite.

As I have previously stated, 60 per cent of my electorate and the wider Redlands must commute outside of the area for work, yet the government has hit commuters across the state with significant increases in public transport costs. The government has withdrawn weekly, monthly and yearly tickets, which is a blow to commuters in my electorate who use the Cleveland line as a vital link to their work.

Another measure in this budget is the removal of concessions on stamp duty on the sale of a principal place of residence. This concession that non-first home buyers receive when buying homes as their principal place of residence will be removed from 1 August. This decision to slash stamp duty concessions for all but first home buyers has been tipped to wreak havoc on the real estate industry. It will cost Redlands residents on average \$7,000 on the price of selling their homes every time they sell. Both the opposition and the Real Estate Institute of Queensland have slammed the move, claiming it punishes homebuyers and will affect the real estate industry badly.

The property market in the Redlands has been hit in recent years, with many real estate agents struggling to get by with very low sales. This budget measure will kick them again while they are down. I stand with the shadow Treasurer in opposing this measure and support the commitment that the LNP in government would reintroduce the concession on this stamp duty for Queenslanders. After we consider this world of pain inflicted by this failed long-term Labor government on Queenslanders, we still have not factored into the Queensland economy in the near future the federal taxes that are coming—the carbon tax, the mining tax and the flood levy—that the Premier and the Treasurer have embraced.

I will now turn my attention to my shadow ministry portfolio of main roads. Time prevents me from giving a full and detailed appraisal of all of the government's failures to deliver on main roads. Sadly, the budget reveals numerous cases of underspends—that is, the failure to spend money allocated to vital road projects. In main roads, that can mean project delay, inconvenience, lost productivity and, at times, a prolonged risk of motor vehicle accidents. This budget reveals a number of underspends and shows this government's incapacity to deliver on what is promised and provide the road infrastructure that Queenslanders need and deserve. These are serious discrepancies and they have serious consequences for anyone who uses Queensland roads.

Of the \$550 million pledged for construction works on the Dinmore-Goodna stretch of the Ipswich Motorway, only \$360 million will be spent. That is \$190 million, or 35 per cent, worth of progress, that did not occur in the time frame committed to by the minister. I should add that this is not money saved—the total estimated cost has not come down; this is a delay and amounts to a breach of contract with the people of west Brisbane and Ipswich and anyone from further afield who relies on the proposition that the main arterial route between Brisbane and Ipswich is in a passable condition. Then there is the disgraceful Cooroy-Curra section of the Bruce Highway. Of the \$288 million meant to be spent in 2010-11, just \$106 million was spent. That is \$182 million not spent, or 63 per cent of its value.

This just would not stand in many fields of endeavour, yet in this most serious of business—the business of providing and delivering safe and functional roads for the motorists of Queensland—there is breach after breach. A 75 per cent failure to spend on the grade separation works south of Cairns, an 84 per cent failure to spend on the Temples Lane to Farrellys Lane duplication of the Bruce Highway near Mackay, a 36 per cent failure to spend on widening of the Pacific Motorway between Nerang and Worongary—the list goes on and on. Spending failures mean project delays, broken promises and, with a government of this calibre, slick repackaging of money that has not been spent when and how the public was entitled to expect.

If only that was the extent of it, but it is not. In real terms, the Bligh government has slashed its construction budget for national and state network roads in 2011-12. Budget analysts will know that the NDRRA disaster relief funding—which will be of great and urgent assistance to the areas of the state hardest hit by the national disasters—is not to be counted as part of the state's standard acquittal. Certainly, the RACQ understands this when it talks roads and motoring. What has the RACQ said? It reacted to this budget and said—

... if you take out the flood recovery money, Queenslanders are actually getting less for road upgrades.

Executive manager Michael Roth asserted—

It is disappointing to see that the State's contribution to roads funding is going backwards while motorists are being asked to pay annual increases in registration fees and other government costs such as driver's licences.

It is actually time to put some truth on the record about this relief money, to counteract the way the government has spun these funds. The NDRRA funding is the entitlement of every Queenslanders when natural disasters strike. It is contingency funding that comes directly from the Commonwealth government of the day, and rightly so. It is not to be spruiked for the expedience of a state government under pressure.

Finally, in terms of my role as shadow minister for fisheries and marine infrastructure, I want to make some comments on marine infrastructure. Queenslanders are similarly aware of the stealth that this government conducts itself in with regard to the privatisation of assets and, as has been documented, this government has divested itself of some of our marine infrastructure asset base such as the Port of Brisbane and the Abbot Point Coal Terminal, but there are other assets still left in the portfolio. A familiar theme develops rapidly when we look at this. The Cairns city port foreshore development missed out on \$6.7 million of committed money in 2010-11. That is a 72 per cent spending failure. At the same time, the total estimated project cost has increased from \$17.3 million to \$23.3 million and it is further away from completion than this time last year. That is what underspending means to infrastructure development in the marine area.

The RG Tanna Coal Terminal at the port of Gladstone has had the Wallace treatment as well, with a \$25.4 million spending failure for 2010-11. Some 63 per cent of the funding allocated to upgrade and improve the fourth biggest coal export terminal in the world here in Queensland was kept in the pot. With regard to the port of Gladstone tug facilities, of the \$14 million set for acquittal at one of Queensland's most significant infrastructure assets, just \$100,000 was actually spent. The total estimated cost of the tug facility upgrade has remained very similar from 2010-11 to 2011-12, having been revised down by \$2.5 million from \$47.5 million to \$45 million. For project after significant project, the tale remains the same.

In conclusion, every time Queenslanders fill up their cars, turn on the tap and flick on the lights they are paying more thanks to the Premier and Treasurer and this Labor government. Only the LNP can offer real change to the cost of living in Queensland. The people of Queensland need a can-do government that will save them money and deliver more by getting action on the basics and cutting waste.