



Speech by

Hon. D. HAMILL

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard 27 April 1999

GOVERNMENT ELECTION PROMISES

Hon. D. J. HAMILL (Ipswich—ALP) (Treasurer) (6.31 p.m.): In his address to the House this evening, and this morning when he gave notice of the motion for this debate tonight, the Leader of the Opposition did his customary trick of quite clearly misrepresenting the words of Government members—in this case the Premier. The Leader of the Opposition referred to correspondence which the Premier wrote to the member for Nicklin, Mr Peter Wellington. I have a copy of that correspondence here, and I believe that it is worth hearing again the exact words that were contained in that correspondence. In relation to Queensland's finances, the Premier wrote—

"In our meeting you expressed very clearly your commitment to maintaining sound financial management of the State. I share this concern and commit my team to maintaining the Queensland tradition of a surplus budget and rigorous management of the State's resources."

The Premier, Mr Beattie, went on to talk about the costings document which had been undertaken by KPMG for an independent third-party assessment of Labor's election platform. In the context of Labor's election commitments, it was stated in that document that Labor could deliver its capital and current program without imposing any new taxes or increasing existing taxes and charges above current real levels. This Government has honoured to the letter what was undertaken to Mr Wellington in that correspondence by Peter Beattie.

Firstly, in our Budget last year there were no new taxes; there were no increases in taxes and charges above the CPI. Contrary to claims tonight, if I challenged Opposition members to demonstrate just one example of how we departed from that commitment, they would not be able to demonstrate such an example.

Furthermore, the commitment that was made did not anticipate that the former coalition Ministers, including the former Treasurer of that Government, could stand up straight faced in this Parliament and assert, as they did, that they had fully funded their commitments in areas such as the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. Reports presented in this Parliament highlighted the fact that the coalition Government undertook commitments—not only promises, but commitments—of additional staff and additional expenditure without worrying for one minute where the money was going to come from. The reports that they had, and the report that was done by PricewaterhouseCoopers—which my colleague the Minister for Emergency Services will no doubt go into in some detail this evening—demonstrated quite clearly that the financial position of the Fire and Rescue Authority was simply unsustainable; that the reserve that existed was going to be eaten up in the course of one year because of the irresponsibility of honourable members opposite.

While I am talking about irresponsibility, I could not help being buoyed by the comments of the honourable member for Moggill, who categorised the increase in compulsory third-party insurance premiums as a tax increase. He must have forgotten these words—

"Consequently, when the Government increases the premium, we are not talking about a tax or a Government charge, rather it is a premium paid to private insurers just like any other form of insurance."

Who spoke those words in the Parliament? None other than the member for Moggill! And he did so when he was trying to justify a \$66 increase in compulsory third-party insurance premiums in 1996.

Mr Borbidge: Did you agree with him?

Mr HAMILL: The Leader of the Opposition has made a lot of false comments here in the Parliament this evening. In that debate, I stated that the then Treasurer was basically asking the insurers how high the premium should go. She asked, "How high should we jump?" and she just jumped.

I contrast that approach with the approach that this Government has taken. We rejected the claims of insurers for an \$80 increase. We rejected the claim of the Insurance Commissioner for a \$52 increase. In that debate three years ago, Peter Beattie questioned why the profit margins for insurers had to increase from 6% to 7.5%. We have honoured, both in intent and by deed, the very objections which we raised when the former Government slugged Queensland motorists by an additional \$66 in 1996. We reduced the profit margins to the insurers. We believed that the insurers should be satisfied with the same profit margins as insurers in New South Wales receive. Six per cent was good enough in New South Wales, and 6% was good enough in Queensland. That meant that we recognised the needs of the battlers and we were able to cut back the premiums.

Time expired.
