



Speech by

## Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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### BEATTIE LABOR GOVERNMENT

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.29 a.m.): In the last few days we have seen some rather fanciful predictions from the state Treasurer about things that we can expect in the budget today. One of those fanciful suggestions came yesterday in the form of a business investment projection for Queensland for the 2004-05 financial year. The Treasurer is predicting business investment growth in Queensland for this coming financial year to be 8.5 per cent. It sounds good, doesn't it? But how does that compare to last year's business investment projection from Mr Mackenroth and what he actually delivered in that financial year? In this current state budget year, Mr Mackenroth predicted that there would be a 9.5 per cent increase in business investment in Queensland. What is he now saying that this government will deliver? He is saying that the government will deliver no more than 6.5 per cent. The government has fallen three per cent short of what it said it would be able to deliver in terms of a business investment increase in Queensland. That is a significant fall away from the predicted level. I say it again: the government predicted 9.5 per cent; it says it is going to deliver 6.5 per cent.

What has Mr Mackenroth done? He has done absolutely nothing to learn from those bogus and bodgie figures that he put in last year's state budget. He has now gone out there as part of his budget leak process and said that the people of Queensland can look forward to an 8.5 per cent increase in business investment. I would say that the people of Queensland should look at what the Treasurer says and look at what the Treasurer actually delivers. If he says he is going to deliver 8.5 per cent this coming financial year and if we look at what he actually delivered in the current financial year, we can rest assured that it will be no more than five per cent or thereabouts.

What has this state government done in the last year with regard to encouraging business investment? It has done very little in Queensland. We have seen the disintegration of the Southern Pacific Petroleum shale oil plant project near Gladstone. We have seen the scrapping of the proposed Brisbane to Darling Downs waste water pipeline. The government went to the election telling people it was not on and then said that it may have been on if it was elected and then straight after the election it said, 'Let's forget about it because it's not on.' We have heard that from the Minister for State Development and the Minister for the Environment. We have seen the collapse of the proposed \$286 million LG chemical plant in Gladstone. We have also seen the breakdown of the planned AMC magnesium plant in central Queensland and cane harvester manufacturer AUSTOFF's decision to move from Bundaberg to Brazil. Maybe when the Premier was over there last week he should have done something about getting it back. We have seen interstate relocations by Kelloggs, Incitec Fertilisers and Herron's head office. We have the loss of icon Queensland mining company MIM to Switzerland and also Qantas's decision to base its new budget airline interstate. Is it any wonder that the Queensland Labor government fell short of its 9.5 per cent projected increase in business investment and only delivered 6.5 per cent? But Mr Mackenroth did not say that in the parliament today.

We were also treated to the spectacle of the Minister for Emergency Services standing in this place this morning and telling us that there has been an increase of urgent call-outs for the Ambulance Service of 7,000 in Queensland in recent times. One would have thought that the government's response to that should have been more ambulances. One would have thought that the government's response to that

should have been more ambulance officers. But it is not! The government's response to that significant and that dramatic increase in call-outs for urgent cases in Queensland with a growing population is to actually cut the amount of money which is going to be spent on purchasing new and replacement ambulance vehicles in this year's state budget as a comparison to other years.

I want to restate: some seven years ago when the coalition government was in power in Queensland, \$9.2 million was spent on new and replacement ambulance vehicles. In 1998-99, the amount spent was \$9.6 million. In 2001-02, it was \$10.5 million. That is three years ago, and our population has grown by hundreds of thousands in that time. So we spent more before the ambulance tax in 2001-02 than we are spending now with the ambulance tax. So where is all the money going? The other day we saw another one of those carefully crafted budget leaks where the Treasurer went out there and said that in this year's state budget we will allocate \$9.9 million for new and replacement ambulance vehicles. What happened? The ambulance union came in hook, line and sinker and Steve Crow said that this was great and shows that the ambulance tax is starting to deliver for Queenslanders.

What Steve Crow did not do was see through the spin and go and check what was spent in this current budget year—\$9.9 million. It has not increased, but we have an ambulance tax raking in \$100 million or thereabouts. The government will not tell us the figures. Once again, that is the arrogance of this government. It sees no need whatsoever and no obligation whatsoever to be accountable to this parliament—none whatsoever. It will not tell us how much it has raised. In actual fact, in a letter to one of the honourable member for Darling Downs's constituents last year or the year before, the Treasurer's own department said that the ambulance tax was in fact not designed to go strictly to the Ambulance Service but was a broad based service tax for the delivery of services in Queensland. That letter has been tabled. It is now a matter of the parliamentary record. Is it any wonder that Queenslanders are growing increasingly more cynical of this government and its incapacity to deliver with all of the spin and the smoke and mirrors?

This morning we heard another abuse of parliamentary process from the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing. He stood up in this place and used the privilege process to seek to justify and to walk away from the government's blow-out on the Millennium Arts Project. He sought to say that the increase in construction costs in Queensland has been some 20 per cent over the last four years. When this government has been talking in this place and elsewhere about the Millennium Arts Project, as late as last year it was talking about the original cost of \$230 million. It was not talking about \$277 million. In actual fact, a newspaper article from 3 April last year stated that—

... plans for the \$228.8 million cultural precinct on the Brisbane River, including an iconic Gallery of Modern Art, will move a step closer to reality next week.

The government did not move last year to say that the cost of construction has gone up 20 per cent so it is now going to cost \$277 million. We heard nothing from it whatsoever. So it kept the lie alive. It kept the lie alive. In actual fact, in this parliament on 9 September last year when the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing stood up and spoke about capital works in Queensland, what did he actually say? What did he actually say on that date? There are a number of interjections in here, but he went on to say—

This new model is also promoted by Construction Queensland. The contract for the \$230 million Millennium Arts Project, incorporating the new Gallery of Modern Art and an expanded State Library, will be finalised within the next two weeks, much to the joy of the Arts Minister, who sits in front of me.

The then Arts Minister was Matt Foley. Not a word—nary a skerrick of a word—from the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing about the \$50 million blow-out. We never heard it. That was in September last year, a little over six months ago. Where was the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing then? Keeping it quiet from the people of Queensland because of the upcoming state election?

**Mr Hopper:** Too busy abusing people he was.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Too busy abusing people, as the honourable shadow minister says. We have also done some researching. If one looks at the increased cost in housing, the *Courier-Mail* of 22 November 2003—only two months after the minister stood in parliament in September and did not talk about the cost going up—showed that the price for a Brampton 232 home was \$111,080. Exactly the same home exactly six months later cost \$112,980. That is not 20 per cent; that is only one per cent. Where was this 20 per cent increase in construction costs? This government has kept the lie alive.

The Premier stood up four years ago saying that the Millennium Arts Project will be on budget and on time. It has gone over budget by \$50 million. Quite frankly, it is just not on. Also this morning we saw in this parliament the Treasurer dodging around the issue of state taxation. In actual fact, he did not stand there and tell us that per capita state taxation has increased since the GST came in to \$1,451 over \$1,399. That is state tax, not local government tax.

Time expired.