



Speech by

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APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2); APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.24 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak to Appropriation Bill (No. 2). I do so with great eagerness, as I would like to tell parliamentarians a story. Late last year I was interested to read that Racing Victoria enabled the major race callers from each state to call one race each on Sandown Classic Day. This meant that race 1 was called by the race caller from Victoria, the next race was called by a caller from New South Wales, our own Alan Thomas got to call, and so on and so forth. The idea is that it showcases the talents of callers from around Australia. This made me think: imagine if we could showcase the talents of Labor governments around Australia and roll them all into one supergovernment—the government of 'Laborland'. What would a typical day in Laborland involve?

Let us say that we are off to the races. It is a glorious Saturday, not a cloud in the sky. However, I sleep through my alarm. But how could I sleep through my alarm? It is very loud. Alas, it is flashing '12.00' because the Queensland segment of the Laborland government controls the energy department and the lights are out—again. Not to worry. Even though it is surprising that there is a blackout while there is perfect daylight, I am still able to see my keys to drive my car over to the racetrack. As I drive I look at my watch, remembering that my day is already set back because my alarm did not go off and I think I am going to be late, although being late is almost a given because any area in Laborland that is controlled by the Queenslanders is always one hour behind as there is no daylight saving.

I am surprised that up ahead my progress is further slowed because I have to pay money at a toll plaza to use a road that the Laborland government promised us would not be a toll road. It is not surprising that the road was forced to have a toll on it, though, because the Victorian element of the Laborland government has control of the road and, as such, these things are likely to happen. In fact, I think some other Labor figures in the government came out and said that it was just another broken promise by the Victorian contingent of the Laborland government. There is a saying that 'only the Vics could build a freeway that isn't free'.

I really have to scarp around for some change, too. The taxes that are being imposed on the residents of Laborland are extraordinary. While I know that the Treasury in Laborland receives advice from all of the states, it is the West Australians who are taxing the residents for absolutely everything. In fact, debt levels have increased by a billion dollars since the financial reins were handed to the Western Australians, though they are following in a good Labor tradition of economic vandalism.

I get over this, though, and end up going to the track, where I am supposed to meet some friends arriving at a train station nearby. Unfortunately, the trains in Laborland are run by the New South Wales arm of the government and they are never on time, if they arrive at all. It is a really frustrating thing—so much so that by the time they arrive the first race has already happened. The commuters' mood is tempered somewhat by the fact that they were given free transport today because the New South Wales arm of the Laborland government was forced to open gates to commuters because of a commuter revolt. We enter the racecourse only to be told that a disagreement between stewards and other officials has

become so bad that the rest of the meeting has been cancelled. I perhaps should have predicted this, because I vaguely remember that Queensland is running the racing industry.

I am so annoyed that I jump in my car. As I scrounge around for some change to pay yet another toll I realise that I have only a few dollars left so I go to some dodgy store and buy a cheap and nasty burger. The next day, again in darkness, I feel a bit ill and am rushed to hospital with food poisoning. Again I run into trouble when there are not enough beds in the hospital and not enough staff to staff them. I think all elements of the Laborland government had a hand in this. However, the fact that cost blow-outs have caused the closure of some wings of the hospital means I am rushed from one hospital to another, a policy introduced by the Queenslanders and perfected by the South Australians. As I lay there in my agony I think to myself that management on behalf of the Labor Party is very, very poor here in Laborland, although not as bad as it could have been if the federal arm of the party had gotten its hands on the Treasury coffers.

I raise this because I remember being told by members opposite that this budget was amazing, that it was the best budget ever. How can this be the best budget ever when we have people writing emails to our offices, calling our offices or coming in from local businesses to tell us of their lost turnover because of a failing power network? Apparently we have a well-managed budget. I am glad that those opposite think the budget is well managed, because not even the most hardened Labor hack could say that the power network is well managed.

I have had emails from small business owners saying that they may as well be ripping up \$100 notes because of thousands of dollars in lost money from stock that has gone off and customers leaving shopping centres. We must remember that while the power is off shops are still paying rent on what is essentially a dead ship.

If this budget is so good, why is it that schools are being closed in communities around the state? I have a petition from people in Cairns—1,800 kilometres from my electorate—who have approached me as the Liberal shadow spokesman for education calling on the state government not to sell off land earmarked for a primary school. There is a community expectation that there is going to be a school on the land, yet the other side of the House decided against it. If this is really the best budget handed down by a Labor government, why is it that the land is being sold in a short-sighted cash grab? Such a move wreaks of desperation and of a government unable to control Queenslanders' cash.

This is the same let-down that the government has inflicted on Queensland parents with regard to the prep year. It is sad that the education minister again in this best budget ever and clearly breaking an election promise has had to admit that not all the classrooms scheduled to be ready for prep year in 2007 will be ready. If this is the best budget ever, there must be some sort of problem with the planning of the expenditure of the money or, as I suspect, there is not enough money allocated to this very important plan. Which parents is the education minister going to apologise to—those parents who had expected their children were going to prep year in 2007?

I also have to ask why this, the best budget in years, has led to people from the electorate of Albert asking me why essential speech therapy units have been stripped from the area. If enough money were allocated to education in this budget or if the money were allocated in the correct manner, students would be receiving speech therapy where they need it. It is ludicrous for children to be denied speech therapy by hospitals because they are told they will be taken care of by the education department when the education department is not looking after them at all.

I also say to the government that if the state coffers are in such good repair then maybe the Gold Coast can receive its fair share of infrastructure. As I have said again and again, the Gold Coast is a region that needs greater infrastructure than its permanent residency would normally warrant due to sometimes having up to 50,000 tourists per night. Yet at times this government has been behind or has refused to deliver even a minimum level of help to the Gold Coast especially compared to Brisbane. Brisbane's public transport system, which is partly funded by the state government, is the benchmark for what is required on the Gold Coast, yet there is limited support from the state government.

I am also concerned about the housing department. On the Gold Coast in the middle of my seat the department has spent \$1.25 million on land to house eight to 10 units. The land is close to the river on a main road opposite a tavern and is surrounded by dwellings that are becoming more and more commercial. Surely the department could have found a different place to build these dwellings. There are plenty of other places around the electorate if the minister would like a tour so that more than just 10 dwellings could be built on land worth \$1.25 million.

I also encourage the Treasurer if he is serious about surpluses and likes having his name behind budgets that hand down windfalls for the state to talk to the Premier about his refusal to trial daylight saving in Queensland. By the time we are in working hours each day, the southern states have been working for an hour and as such there are only seven hours in the day for trade and commerce interstate for four months of the year. The loss of productivity from losing an hour each day has its effects on the bottom line and the biggest thing to suffer is the Queensland economy. Much of this detriment is suffered closer to the

border—in particular on the Gold Coast. As such, I urge the Treasurer, if for no other reason than his bottom line, to appeal to the Premier to change his mind and make the right decision on daylight saving—that is, the right decision for south-east Queensland.

Then again, who am I to judge the Premier? Everyone in this chamber should be in awe of the man. It seems that over the summer recess the Premier has been adding to his already impressive resume which consists of a shrine of honorary doctorates and a deluge of praise and accolades. He is not content sitting still—not at all. Instead, he has branched out into the field of science. Our Premier has taken on the scientific community accounting for years of knowledge in the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Dental Association and their American, Canadian and British counterparts to label the fluoridation of our water a public health risk. I urge the Premier, with his new-found knowledge and information, with the secret key that he has used to unlock the mysteries of the medical world and armed with the courage that only comes with making what he sees as infallible decisions under the cloak of Christmas holidays, to go to all the other Labor health ministers and all of the Labor premiers—all of whom have fluoridated water sitting in carafes on the parliamentary desks at question time—and save them from this obvious health risk.

Do not get me wrong: this is not the only string that the Premier has added to his bow. Over the break, the word around the pubs and clubs, the word in the parks and sporting fields around the state is that the Premier has become a profiler. In a weekend bulletin on 5 February—an article I table—we have the Premier saying that one of his members, the member for Broadwater, was not a bully despite those allegations being levelled against her. His defence was not based on fact. In true Labor style, it was light on substance but heavy on smoke and mirrors. In defence of his member, Mr Beattie said, 'I say to the community, have a look at PK Croft and if you think PK Croft is capable of bullying well you have a different view of PK Croft than I do.' This is a fantastic revelation. Mr Beattie has the ability to simply look at people and judge whether or not they are a bully. This could make the whole of Queensland's bureaucracy more efficient. In fact, we can dispense with the court system. We could have a travelling roadshow that sees the profiler, Mr Beattie, sitting on his chair of judgment, or to be more romantic about it he could sit on a rocky escarpment, and we can parade those accused of crimes in front of him. Then by simply looking at the accused, by glancing over their presence, he can judge whether they are a murderer. Simply by seeing a photo, the profiler can determine the deceitful from the honest.

The education minister can take note that perhaps instead of having to worry about the QCS, or any schooling for that matter, the profiler can cast his profiling eye over all students and grant them an OP ranking from 1 to 25. In fact, perhaps Mr Beattie could be the standardised tester for all of Australia. I only wish that the Premier and Treasurer could use his new-found skills or at least his ability to make decisions just on appearance to make the right calls about the budget. Instead, they have not made the right decisions. They have christened a thoroughly substandard budget as the best budget ever.

As members may be aware, I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee—a committee concerned with efficiency, economy and effectiveness. A top-up of \$2.4 billion represents nearly 10 per cent of the budget and the need for this top-up provides me with a great deal of worry. Here we have \$2.4 billion not accounted for in the precise manner that it is in the ministerial portfolio statements at budget time and we are just expected to rubber-stamp it. That is ridiculous and a shocking display of fiscal mismanagement is reprehensible on the government's behalf. When looking at this practice of simply topping up budgets after they have been mishandled, we see that the government's actions are at odds with the motto of the Public Accounts Committee. This practice most certainly is not efficient, is definitely not good economic practice and is not in any way effective. The Treasurer is wrong. This is not the best budget ever. Sadly, it misses the mark by a long way.