



Speech by

Mark McArdle

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Mr McArdle (Caloundra—Lib) (4.30 pm): It does give me pleasure today to rise to say a few words with regard to these bills.

Mr Lucas: Just a few?

Mr McArdle: Well, maybe one or two more than that. May I start by applauding the comments made by the members for Southern Downs and Robina when they dissected these bills and provided some reality on exactly what is going on in this House within these two budget documents. Can I also say that, irrespective of the comments made by members on that side of the House with regard to raising money and being able to fund this budget, it all comes down to John Howard and the federal coalition government. It is as simple and straightforward as that.

A government member interjected.

Mr McArdle: Members on the government benches can um and ah as much as they like; the reality is that this budget is derived out of the effort, hard work and dedication of the federal government under the auspices of John Howard and a very strong coalition. In fact, if we look at some of the capital outlays in the 2005-06 budget, we see significant underspending by major departments—by Disability Services, Health, Housing, Public Works and Queensland Transport. They underspent by \$429 million—that is \$429 million that was not spent on essential needs, essential infrastructure and essential services across the state.

It therefore begs a series of questions: where has all the money gone? Where has all this money gone that the federal government poured into this state? The federal government, not this state government, has filled the coffers and made it possible for this state to grow and continue to expand. We have a state government here that is bereft of ideas and common sense and is simply unable to plan for the future. We have plenty of promises and plenty of rhetoric on that side of the House, but we actually have nothing concrete.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr McArdle: Talking about concrete, let us look at what the minister for transport has done. There has been an underspend of \$116 million in the 2005-06 budget. I wonder where all those moneys went. It is very quiet on the other side of the House now when it comes to explaining the shortfalls in the capital outlays in 2005-06.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! The member will address his comments through the chair.

Mr McArdle: I would like to look at what this budget delivers to the seat of Caloundra. Bear in mind that we have a budget of \$29 billion, and it is quite clear that the seat of Caloundra has been almost completely ignored by this government. One prime example is the Caloundra Hospital. In 2005 the government trumpeted that it would spend \$50 million on expanding the services and upgrading that hospital by 2009-10. We now have four years left and there is a budget of \$50 million still to be spent. In this year's budget, the magnificent sum of \$4.75 million has been allocated, leaving a shortfall of some

\$45 million over a period of three years. This government has told the people of Caloundra that, although it makes all the statements, it is simply unable to deliver on its claims. In essence, the most important public hospital on the southern end of the Sunshine Coast has been completely ignored.

This government has supposedly planned a major new hospital on the Sunshine Coast. In fact, it was announced in May last year that land had been sited and that plans were in train to acquire and construct this hospital, but we still do not have an announcement of where this brand-new \$500 million hospital is going to be built on the Sunshine Coast. That is simply a disgusting situation for the people of the Sunshine Coast.

This government has been planning to make some form of an announcement for well over 12 months, yet it is unable to garner the strength to even indicate where the hospital is going to be—let alone elaborate on what services will be provided and what expansion plans it has once the hospital is completed. Bear in mind that when the government does make that announcement and that hospital is finally, if ever, constructed, the Nambour General Hospital will still need to be considered. What has become of that? That is a whole new kettle of fish which I am certain this government will not be able to deal with.

I turn to CAMCOS, the major rail corridor planned for the Sunshine Coast region, which is to be constructed over a 20-year period. This is a \$1.1 billion project, but what has been provided in this budget? Five million dollars. But that money is not for construction; it is to 'investigate, plan and acquire land for a rail service between Beerwah and Maroochydore'. Here we have the major public infrastructure requirement on the Sunshine Coast over the next 20 years, and we have \$5 million poured into it. Not only that, this government does not have the capacity to draw in the 20-year time line, nor does it have the capacity, in my opinion, to actually plan and get this rail line produced.

Mr Lawlor: Tell us about the Gold Coast rail line.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Southport!

Mr McARDLE: The coalition has made it very clear that we will have this built within 10 years. Mr Deputy Speaker, maybe the member for Southport should put his head back down on the desk and we will wake him if we need him to join the debate. It is very clear that the government is simply unable to progress the CAMCOS corridor and will let this fly into the never-never. I am certain that other members on the Sunshine Coast, including the member for Kawana and the member for Noosa, will join me in asking the government to explain why the CAMCOS rail corridor has not been fast-tracked, given that they are equally aware of the necessity for a public rail system and transport system to be constructed across the region.

The other point I wish to discuss with regard to the Caloundra electorate is the Meridan State College. I note that there is \$5 million in the budget for stage 2 construction of the school, and I congratulate the government for putting that in place. I am also aware that the department of transport has agreed to meet the costs associated with roadworks around the school with the local council. Those roadworks are essential because that school now fronts one of the busiest road intersections in the area, with the opening of Parklands Boulevard. The school fronts Sunset Drive both at its entry and to its left. The roads around there will carry significant traffic, not just vehicle traffic but also heavy trucks transporting soil and other matter for constructing the multimodal corridor. It is important for the safety of the children, parents, teachers and staff of Meridan State College who use the intersection that some work is undertaken immediately. At this time, there is no crossing, no lights and very few safety mechanisms in place to ensure that children can enter and exit the school in a safe manner.

The other point is that the Sunshine Coast is bereft of public, affordable and crisis housing across the whole region. I acknowledge that there is a problem right throughout the whole of the Sunshine Coast and also throughout Queensland.

As I said last night in this House, there is an urgent need for certain government departments to be located within the city of Caloundra. I outlined that the housing department would be one that would be greatly received in the area. There is nothing more important than to have local knowledge. That local knowledge can only be gained by being on the ground. Caloundra State High School has demountables that have been in place for well over 20 years. In fact, the president of the P&C went to the high school himself and was taught in those demountables. He now has children who are in grade 11 at the school. It is time for those demountables to be removed and a more permanent and adequate structure put in place.

Mr Reeves: That is what this funding is going to do.

Mr McARDLE: Absolutely. It is about time that the government focused on Caloundra and the Caloundra State High School, which has been completely and totally ignored by this government. For the last eight years it has procrastinated and done nothing. It has been stuck with its wheels spinning in the sand. It has moved backwards, in fact.

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mansfield.

Mr McARDLE: Turning to the portfolio statement of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, it is sad that the legal system in this state has fallen into such a state of disrepair and the advances made under the conservative governments of the past have largely been buried due to the necessity of this government to focus significant funds on other areas. Those areas are still languishing due to this government's incompetence and mismanagement. When members consider the crises that we have lurched to and from in the last eight years it is no wonder that the Attorney-General's department has been bereft of funds and not able to pursue, I am certain, an agenda that the Attorney would like to see put in place.

I will highlight a couple of points contained within the budget itself in relation to the Attorney's portfolio. The Criminal Justice Information Integration Strategy was established in 1994. That was referred to in the CJC's Funding Justice report in 2001 as facilitating the recording and exchange of information between criminal justice agencies and to establish statistical reports on the criminal justice system. The first task of the CJIS was to take the lead in developing and refining common rules for counting and classifying offences, offenders and victims across the criminal justice system agencies.

In 2001 that matter was being examined by the Law and Justice Policy Unit of the Office of the Premier and Cabinet. The CJC report at page 89 states as follows—

Despite the good intentions behind these strategies (and as reported in volume 5 of the CJC's criminal justice system monitor) there has been only limited progress towards a more coordinated approach towards the monitoring and management of the criminal justice system. This appears to be the result of technical difficulties preventing the various agencies from linking their information systems and the culture of the organisations involved. For example, the primary focus of the police, the courts and corrective services is in each case, upon the particular functions than the broad criminal justice system. There is no requirement for agencies to think in terms of a criminal justice impact statement when new policies are proposed or implemented.

The lack of any integrated data management system across the key agencies has always meant that a system-wide, rather than an agency's specific focus, was not especially useful for individual agencies or for the government more generally. Further agencies have been either unwilling or unable to commit themselves to the operational changes that a system-wide focus would require.

Comments made by the CJC and echoed by other individuals and bodies since that time should be applauded. Although there have been words of encouragement there has been limited action by this government in implementing what would appear to be a logical and efficient service, a service that would assist not only the criminal justice system but also the residents and citizens of the state. The complications involved in the criminal justice system in today's world and the overlay of the various departments and agencies make it an integral element of the continued development of a positive, visionary, forward-looking body.

Let us now look at exactly what this government has undertaken in this regard. In the 2003-04 budget the figure for capital acquisition on the integrated justice information strategy was \$3.291 million. The actual was \$2.791 million, a shortfall of some \$500 million. In the 2004-05 budget there was a figure of \$7.31 million but the actual was a figure of \$2.55 million, a shortfall of close to \$5 million. Now we are expected to believe that in the 2006-07 budget there is going to be a \$6.152 million spend in that area. Not in any year has the Attorney-General's office met the capital acquisition estimate of budget figures on this issue and it is hard to believe that a project as vital as this is now languishing in the quagmire.

I do note that in the 2006-07 documents the Attorney referred to a capital funding of \$11.3 million, leading to a \$20.9 million spend over two years and those moneys to be placed into the integrated justice information strategy program. The figure of \$11.3 million is, of course, a misnomer. Anybody reading that paragraph would certainly believe it was falling directly from the Attorney-General's portfolio. That is not the case. It is drawn from a number of portfolios. Be that as it may, there is little doubt this information system so badly needed was identified in 2001 as an important principle that should be followed up. However, this policy has not been fully implemented under this government.

It may well be that the Attorney-General's portfolio is suffering as the consequence of the ineptitude of other departments. Many speakers on this side of the House have outlined very clearly where the ineptitude lays. In my opinion, that is having a negative impact on the Attorney's portfolio and the capacity of the department to reach and plan for the future.

A second issue is the prosecution's case management information system which in the 2005-06 budget figures had a budgeted capital outlay of \$2.2 million. Lo and behold, in that year no moneys were spent on this particular policy. There were no moneys spent whatsoever in putting into place the prosecution's case management information system. I would have thought that that would have been an integral part of the criminal justice system right throughout all courts and departments, in particular the DPP.

At the same time, I also note that there was a sum of \$230,000 allocated in the 2005-06 budget to fit out and accommodate the office of the DPP. That figure of \$230,000 blew out to \$2.056 million, an increase of 893 per cent. The money clearly had to come from other funds or other resources and I suspect that is one of the reasons the Attorney's budget at the end of the day on a capital outlay basis failed to meet its target.

The budgeted 2005-06 figure was \$36,911,000. The actual was \$34,390,000, a shortfall of some \$2.5 million not spent in the Attorney-General's portfolio across a number of capital items. Another blow-out in cost was the relocation of Birth, Deaths and Marriages in Brisbane. The 2005-06 budget figures show the cost to be \$276,000, but this came in at \$810,000, an almost threefold increase.

The funding sources of the acquisition segment of the budget paper indicates proceeds of sale of assets at \$9.398 million, giving total funding sources of \$30.064 million, a sum used for capital acquisitions during the 2005-06 financial year. The sum of \$9.398 million was a one-off windfall from the sale of the old magistrates court site here in Brisbane. It is clear that those funds were used to fund other capital acquisitions in the 2005-06 budget. That was a one-off payment and one of that magnitude is not likely to recur.

One other point that I will comment on is the Capital Statement Budget Paper No. 3 document at page 94. There is a sum referred to at that page of \$6.25 million having been set aside for the Brisbane Supreme and District Court redevelopment. I am concerned, however, that the column adjacent to that, the 2006-07 expectation, does not have any detail in it as to whether it is an ongoing matter or other figures to advise what other costs may occur. While I can accept that at this point in time there may not be a possibility of listing what the figures may be, there is a concern that having no notation in there whatsoever means this could simply be on the never-never. That would be a travesty because that court is clearly needed. We need to get that underway as soon as possible.

I want to return to the issue of Caloundra. The Caloundra electorate, as I said earlier, has been totally ignored by this government. It has been languishing for eight years under a Beattie Labor government that has simply not been concerned about this electorate. It has not put any effort into this electorate that will help or benefit the people of the area and, indeed, the Sunshine Coast. It is an absolute disgrace and the people of Caloundra have every right to be disgusted with this budget. This government has said to the people of Caloundra, in essence, that they can simply go and get stuffed. That is a deplorable situation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr English): Order! That is unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr McARDLE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is simply reprehensible that the people of Caloundra have been treated in this shameful and shabby manner by a government that claims to care for all the people of this state, but its actions speak louder than words. It cannot plan, it has no vision and it does not care.