



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.40 pm): With pleasure I rise to speak on the very important Appropriation Bill 2007. I am very proud to stand here as the member for Surfers Paradise and reply to the budget. I will speak about local issues first and acknowledge the support for Bellevue Park State School which has received an extra allocation for an extension of its assembly hall which I have been in. That is greatly appreciated by the people of Bellevue Park. I would like some clarification, if possible, in relation to a report in the *Gold Coast Bulletin*. In the very skinny section of the budget allocated to Surfers Paradise it was reported that there was an allocation to Benowa State High for an arts hall. I could not find that anywhere in the capital statement. I would certainly be happy, along with Principal Mark Rickard, if at some stage we could get that arts hall for Benowa State High. I will keep lobbying for that if the *Gold Coast Bulletin* was actually mistaken in its information yesterday.

Police stations are always very important on the Gold Coast where we have a high incidence of tourist influx and a transient population. Last year allocations were announced in relation to Coomera and Surfers Paradise. The district police station at Coomera will not be completed this year, according to the capital statements. The one in Surfers Paradise certainly will not. I note that the allocation for Surfers Paradise has had to go up to \$4 million from \$2.7 million, but we certainly welcome a police station in the middle of Surfers Paradise in Orchid Avenue. I know that my friend, the member for Robina, would like to have an allocation for his police station which is in George Avenue at Broadbeach. The police there certainly work in very difficult circumstances. And, of course, the member for Robina would like an allocation for stations at Varsity Lakes and Ashmore as well.

I also note with concern police numbers. There will be 200 new police for the whole state. That is down 150 on last year's allocation of 350. I note with concern the attrition rate of two to three per cent in the Police Service, which is up to nearly 10,000 police, which means that we will be losing 200 to 300 a year. I have concerns about whether we are providing enough police when at the Gold Coast there is a great need for more police in many areas, especially in Surfers Paradise which is the heart of the Gold Coast.

The member for Robina has mentioned that of a \$14 billion capital budget when he was counting out the numbers—so I will let him wear the blame for this—there is a mere \$115 million in new projects for the Gold Coast which, of course, is the second largest city in Queensland.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: Exactly, that is right. I will take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. Even though we are representing very vigorously on behalf of the Gold Coast sometimes our Labor members are not as active in their representations as they could be. I also note money announced earlier this year for the extension of the convention centre. We welcome that because it has been a great success.

Mr Lawlor: I will be opening a fete in your electorate on Saturday. Where will you be?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the member for notifying me of his attendance in my electorate.

Mr Lawlor: Where are you going to be?

Mr LANGBROEK: I will be at the Rural Doctors conference speaking to rural doctors. I also note the very disappointing increase of 5c a kilometre in the travel subsidy for people under the travel scheme. The member for Burdekin would be very disappointed with that on behalf of her constituents.

This is the second budget of the Treasurer and Deputy Premier who is in the chamber and I would like to make the comment that I think that it is a very big spending budget. As many members have said before, it is typical of a Labor Deputy Premier. As the health spokesman, I noted with concern a simple line in the Deputy Premier's speech and that was that there was a budget increase of 12 per cent to \$7.15 billion for Queensland Health in 2007-08. I woke up the next morning at about four o'clock and thought, '12 per cent? Boy, that is a big increase.' And, of course, the AMA had also put out a press release saying they welcomed an increase of 12 per cent to \$7.15 billion. I had a look at the Ministerial Portfolio Statement and the Deputy Premier's speech and thought, 'These numbers don't add up'. Last year's budget was \$6.64 billion and the actual estimate was \$6.8 billion, so actually \$6.8 billion was spent. And 12 per cent on top of \$6.64 billion does not get to \$7.15 billion. I was looking because I know how much the Treasurer loves to pick on people who do not get their numbers right. She loves to come in here in her charming way and have a go at people who do not quite get their statistics right.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: That's right, a little bit of Pinocchio happening there. Then I noted that there was a press release from the Minister for Health dated 5 June that said that last year they increased the budget to \$6.38 billion, which was clearly not right. The health minister was not aware of what the allocation had been in last year's budget. He dropped out \$250 million. The Treasurer had taken the health minister's word as gospel and had failed to crunch the numbers herself, which I think is very disappointing given the number of staff that she and the health minister have. In fact, the health budget has increased from \$6.64 billion to \$7.15 billion—money which of course is welcomed but which is actually an increase of 4.95 per cent.

Normally I would be far more gracious about a mistake such as that because 4.95 per cent is still a significant increase in real terms. In medical terms it is significant because, as most people realise, with advances in technology and surgical techniques medical inflation runs consistently higher than increases in the CPI and 4.95 per cent does not cover medical inflation. Clearly, 12 per cent is incorrect. I look forward to the Treasurer and the health minister putting out corrections about this fallacious 12 per cent increase in the Queensland Health budget and proof that they have not got it right when they add up their numbers.

The 4.9 per cent increase is welcome but, when one considers expenses, it puts a lie to the statement that the government will fix the health crisis plaguing Queensland Health. Let us have a closer look at the numbers. As I said, the estimated actual figure for Queensland Health is \$6.8 billion and on these figures the increase in the health budget is just over \$300 million. Last year out of \$6.8 billion, \$4 billion was for employee expenses and wage rises. This year that amount has increased by \$500 million. Employee expenses have gone up \$500 million and the budget increase is only \$300 million. Contrary to the spin that we are getting from this government, there is no extra money to solve the many crises in public hospitals, no extra money to decrease the waiting lists or conciliate with medical radiation professionals and other allied health professionals and scientists left out in the cold in wage negotiations. In fact, there will be less money after the wage rises have been allocated. Obviously if more is spent in one area something has to be cut back and we need to have information in relation to where these cutbacks will be occurring. The government is big on taxation but poor on providing services.

On the same page as the alleged 12 per cent increase, which was actually a 4.95 per cent increase in the budget, the Treasurer spoke about a net increase of doctors by 1,000, 3,000 nurses and more than 1,000 allied health professionals and scientists. But since June 2005 6,000 doctors, nurses and allied health professionals have left Queensland Health. This statistics of resignations shows that all is not well in Queensland Health, which is something the opposition has been saying for a long time.

We have a high-taxing, high-spending, big-borrowing and poor service-providing government, giving us voodoo economics. We have electricity bills with ambulance levies on them and now we have a stamp duty increase supposedly to provide mental health funding. If you landed in Queensland from another planet and heard that this was how taxes were raised and how they were supposedly linked, you would not believe it could be possible. It is evidence of the arrogance of the Beattie government—a government that thinks it can say anything and do anything and get away with it.

More evidence of this big taxation comes in the *Queensland state budget 2007-08 at a glance* document. The stamp duty increases on motor vehicles which we will all have to pay every time we buy a car—whether it is second hand or new—are listed in the budget highlight documents under the heading

'Competitive taxes' as a virtue. The increase in stamp duty is highlighted as a virtue—there will be 'changes to motor vehicle duty rates from 1 January 2008'.

Mr Stevens: More tax as a virtue.

Mr LANGBROEK: More tax sold as a virtue; I take that interjection from the member for Robina.

It is voodoo economics when the government says there are net tax cuts of \$40 million, because we know the government is giving back revenue it promised under the GST agreement but taking \$80 million in the first year with the motor vehicle registration increases. I also note the concerns of my National Party colleagues that there are eight-cylinder diesel vehicles that are more efficient than some six-cylinder vehicles and there are also no concessions given to people who are buying these environmentally friendly enviro cars.

Mr Stevens: The Prius.

Mr LANGBROEK: The Prius and cars like that. There should be incentives in terms of stamp duty concessions for those. I note that members opposite all voted for that yesterday when supposedly they were standing up for the battlers of Queensland—battlers like my daughter who got a 20-year-old Volvo a couple of weeks ago and she has to pay the stamp duty on that.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I will be driving that car soon. I would like to turn to specific figures in the health budget.

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I would like to be able to afford a hybrid. I am very concerned that fewer services will be provided because of the amount that is being spent on wages and salaries. The specific area that I am concerned about in the budget is under the heading 'Future development'. I welcome the fact that recommendations made in the review of mental health conducted by Brendan Butler are being implemented in this budget. I am concerned that in the Deputy Premier's budget speech she actually again almost made a virtue of the fact that it had been eight years since the Forde inquiry and that it has taken eight years to recompense victims in a redress scheme. I hope mental health initiatives will not take as long.

I note that \$40 million has been committed over four years to implement the reforms from the Brendan Butler recommendations. There is \$9.3 million this year. That is welcome, but only in the last sitting week did the coalition state that we thought mental health recommendations and reforms should be implemented sooner rather than later.

I note that the President of the AMA has also called for the Queensland mental health strategic plan to be released, as it was supposed to be in 2006. I am also concerned that the Treasurer once again said that even after the increase in mental health funding—which again will come from the stamp duty on cars—it will still not reach national funding per capita levels. It is just incredible that in 2007 in an area such as mental health—which is one of the biggest issues in health in Queensland—we still have a Deputy Premier and Treasurer saying we will not reach national funding per capita levels.

The concerns I have about palliative care issues were highlighted this morning in the House when the Minister for Health once again showed that he had no knowledge of his portfolio in terms of where palliative care beds were going to be moved from. The member for Robina will remember that he asked the question this morning—

Mr Stevens: Yesterday morning.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yesterday morning, I beg your pardon. The Minister for Health thought that palliative care beds were being moved from Southport Hospital when they were being moved from Robina Hospital. I have spoken to surgeons at the Pacific Private Hospital who tell me that the second floor of the Pacific Private Hospital is the most unsuitable place to put people because there are only a couple of lifts and there is no mortuary at the hospital. It begs the question as to where people in palliative care will be taken after they have died—and many of them will die. Will it be in the dead of night? It is a most unsuitable place.

I note, too, that the health minister recently suggested that the problem with mental health on the Gold Coast was not to do with bed numbers but was to do with staff numbers. That is a sign that he is really out of touch with mental health issues on the coast and throughout the state.

When we look at the Ministerial Portfolio Statement on Health, mental health is once again prime amongst my concerns. There has been a decline of over 11 per cent in the last year for in-patient mental episodes of care—down from 22,070 to 19,526. Once again, we have a crisis in mental health care. Fewer patients are able to be treated. The AMAQ has recommended that we need \$300 million annually. The government has put in \$528 million over four years but, as I said, given the budget has gone up with only a

\$300 million increase overall after an allowance for wages, it begs the question as to how much of this will end up in front-end services.

I note that there are still nearly 35,000 Queenslanders on elective surgery waiting lists. What are all the new staff that the health minister is always talking about in his Health Action Plan doing? He is always saying that thousands have joined Queensland Health but, as I said, 6,000 have left since June or July 2005.

As for bed numbers, I would like to table a sheet that shows the ratio of Queensland public hospital beds to 1,000 people.

Tabled paper: Chart titled 'Ratio of Queensland Public Hospital Beds to 1000 people'.

Ten years ago we had a higher ratio than the rest of Australia. Now we clearly have a lower ratio of beds. It is an indictment on this government that 10 years ago we had 10,000 beds and now we have just over 9,600 beds for a population that has increased markedly.

Mr Rickuss: Has the population gone down?

Mr LANGBROEK: No, the population has gone up. It keeps going up. I keep hearing that we are getting an extra 900 people a week—and it was 1,500 a week—but we have fewer beds than we had 10 years ago.

I have concerns about dental services for children. The occasions of service for children are down 6.6 per cent from 630,000 to 538,000. I have lots of anecdotal evidence from parents who say to me that their children are not being seen by the school dentist as often. I asked a question on notice about that recently and I look forward to getting the answers.

I am concerned about general dental services which have declined 10 per cent from 240,000 to 217,000. I note that the number of emergency clients in dental services increased to over 320,000. This focus on emergency care in dentistry is not like a focus on emergency care in medicine. Emergency care in dentistry is just a patch-up repair. When dentists come to do the final job, it is often much more complex because it was not dealt with originally. This spike in emergency numbers in the dental waiting list is not making a difference to the waiting—

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thanks very much for that, Noddy, I appreciate that, yes. When patients call between seven and eight o'clock and have their emergencies assessed, that leads to the problems becoming much greater later on. As I say, emergency care does not provide a fix for the long term.

I notice there have been well-publicised problems with elective surgery. What has happened to the staff increases? I note too that the Future Growth Fund has been raided of its entire contents of \$3.1 billion and we are descending into more debt. I went back and got the second reading speech in the debate on the Future Growth Fund from May 2006. I note that the same words used in that speech are in the current budget papers—'While other states have directed proceeds from similar sales to pay off debt, the Queensland government's history of prudent financial management means it is able to invest the sale proceeds in the future growth and prosperity of the state.' We spend and we borrow. Big borrowing is a great contrast to the fiscal management of Peter Costello.

The federal Future Fund has been built up over a time of economic stability and growth. Kevin Rudd is already threatening to raid the piggybank at the federal level, if elected, for broadband initiatives or anything else he thinks of. They will just go and raid the Future Fund. Our Future Growth Fund has been spent in one budget. The \$3.1 billion is all accounted for. All of it is allocated. In the original debate on 10 May 2006 there was an expectation of only a billion dollars being raised from the selling off of our energy assets. We have \$3.1 billion all accounted for.

The Premier has always flaunted that Queensland is the lowest tax state. Now the Deputy Premier has had to relinquish that title. South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have lower tax rates than Queensland. I note by her own figures that the Treasurer is allowing for a cash deficit in the general government operating position for 2007-08. Below the net operating result of \$268 million is a cash deficit of \$892 million. It is big taxing, it is big borrowing, it is big spending and it is poor service provision from this Labor government.