



Speech by

## Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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### CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (3.31 pm): In rising to make a contribution to this debate, I would like to start by reflecting upon the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill. This morning in this place I would have liked to have had the opportunity to share a few thoughts about the government putting together the clean coal bill and the appropriation bills in a cognate debate. The Leader of the House indicated that the clean coal bill was a money bill and, therefore, it should be rolled together with the budget bills. I have a different view. Basically, that bill is no different from a lot of other bills that are introduced into this parliament that might require some money to get up and going but in many ways they are not technically tied to a budget bill. To me, that really goes to show one of the fundamental problems of this government, and that is its incapability of running the business of this House properly. If the government does not have enough time in this parliament to debate issues properly, then it should schedule some more sitting days. It should not throw together legislation in a ramshackle way and make unprecedented moves in this place.

It also concerns me very much that every year that goes by this parliament, as a forum of debate, is being watered down and diminished. A couple of years ago in this place I witnessed a situation of members coming in, speaking for a few minutes and then having the remnants of their speeches incorporated in *Hansard*. That practice seems to have been allowed again this year. Obviously, the government is responsible for this, because it is incapable of managing properly the time of this place and scheduling appropriately the right number of sitting days.

What are we going to do next? Stay at home and make our speeches by webcam and have them recorded in the parliamentary record? Is that what members want next? This is a debating chamber. If members do not want to debate issues in this place, then they should not bother. They should sit up in their offices and email their speeches to *Hansard*. This parliament is becoming more and more sterile. This week one of the great characters of this place, Tom Burns, unfortunately passed away. He was a person of enormous colour who could come into this place, stand on his feet and give the most extraordinary but heartfelt contribution. We are seeing less and less of that and far more of a machinery process where people do not want to let fly with their thoughts.

Another thing that concerns me very much is that if we are going to have a process of incorporating speeches in *Hansard* then there is no chance for robust interchange across the chamber. Although the Speaker says that he reads the speeches before they are incorporated in *Hansard* to make sure that there are no personal reflections or imputations contained in them, I would say simply that that is not a good reason to justify the incorporation of those speeches in *Hansard*. A member of parliament may want to respond to something that was said by the member who spoke previous to them. That member may want to challenge what was said. If a member speaks straight after a member who has had the majority of their speech incorporated in *Hansard*, that member has no idea what is in that member's contribution. That member may read something in *Hansard* the next day, but the chance to be able to engage in debate with a member who incorporated a speech is over and done with. If a member makes a claim about what the

government or the opposition may have achieved or put forward in this place as fact and that claim is incorporated in *Hansard* unchallenged, that is it; it is over and done with. This is a debating chamber. It is not a place in which a member puts together a thesis and has it recorded so that the public can read it but there is no real chance for it to be challenged in this place. I ask that there be a proper reconsideration of that process in future, particularly when the government funds the parliament to be the people's parliament—a place in which people's views can be represented.

A lot of honourable members may wonder what I am on about. They may say, 'So what? Who cares? Parliaments evolve.' I would say that parliaments are debating chambers and members need to be able to hear what is being said and contend with it. That is a member's chance to be able to test the veracity of an argument, not to read that argument five or six hours later when it is all too late.

There is no doubt that this budget is a litany of lost opportunity. When the Treasurer introduced the budget we heard a lot from her about how it was a record budget, how there was a record infrastructure spend in the budget, how there is going to be a record capital works expenditure of some \$15 billion—all of those sorts of things. That contrasts with the just over \$5 billion that was outlaid by the coalition government when it was in power in the latter part of the 1990s. We should also look at the fact that at that time the entire budget spend was less than half of what this government is spending. So the capital works spend was going to be less. But the Treasurer failed to say and failed to understand that \$5 billion in 1998 was going to buy more than what \$20 billion is going to buy today. That is the simple reality.

When I was a minister, I was responsible for the recycled water pipeline which this government placed on hold deliberately and maliciously for seven years when it came into power. That pipeline could have been built today at a cost of about \$600 million. We have a government that failed to spend a dollar in time. It now has to spend nine. That is what we are dealing with here—a runaway and rampant capital works budget that is not about delivering more for the people of Queensland but about delivering less for the people of Queensland and costing more at a time when we have a construction capacity crisis because this government has failed to invest over time.

We also have to look at the issue of \$50 billion worth of government and government owned corporation debt, which the people of Queensland are going to be subjected to in some four years time. It is going to ramp up from just over \$20 billion to \$50 billion—that is the indebtedness of the Queensland government and its GOCs—by 2011. That should ring alarm bells. At a time when we are experiencing an economic boom and we basically have money coming out of our ears, this government has to borrow in such a way to provide for essential infrastructure in Queensland. If the government does not have the money and the savings at such a time, if it cannot put the money away in the good times to be able to do this, then heaven help the taxpayers of Queensland in a number of years time when somebody has to pay the piper. There is no doubt that somebody is going to have to pay the piper one day.

In this budget \$1 billion is going to be set aside for the payment of interest only. It is going to be interesting to see over the next few years how much that amount ramps up. An amount of \$1 billion will soon become \$1.5 billion, which will soon become \$2 billion, which will become much more than that at some time in the future. That is not including the redemption; that is the interest.

We all know that at this time the world is flush with access to cheap money sources. The economy is not always going to be like this. One would hope that it will, but we know that the resources boom will not always be like this. So what happens at a future time when this government has exposed the taxpayers of Queensland, through its own borrowings and the borrowings it has forced on its GOCs, to \$50 billion of indebtedness and that debt has to be redeemed? That is a very serious situation for the people of Queensland. Government members may scoff. They may wonder what is going on. I just say: John Cain and Joan Kirner. That is what they did and that debt had to be paid back in a time of non-economic boom.

The federal coalition government has paid back \$96 billion of government debt which had been built up by the Hawke-Keating legacy. It has all been paid back, saving the Australian taxpayers some \$8 billion per year in interest. So at a time when the federal coalition government has been wiping off government debt, has been saving the taxpayers \$8 billion a year in interest, Peter Beattie, Anna Bligh and their Labor Party cohort have been running around increasing the level of indebtedness in Queensland to \$50 billion. The population differential between the Commonwealth government and the state government is also stark and underpins the government's capacity to repay that debt in the long run. A population base of some 20 million people, many of them taxpayers, assisted in paying back the federal government debt, with the sale of some government owned assets such as Telstra along the way, compared with a state government with a population base of only four million people having to at some time in the future pay back \$50 billion of government indebtedness. That is the real concern that I have.

I will touch again on the cost of construction in Queensland. What we now have is not a gravy train for those involved but a gravy pipe. We know, as the government knows, that the price the government is paying for easements for the pipeline is up to 1,000 times more than what would be reasonably negotiated if the government had done it in time. We know that what the government is paying for bedding sand in many cases is 80 per cent greater than what the price would be for non-water grid pipe-laying projects. We know all of those sorts of things. But this government does not care because it has come up with this whole

notion of invoice tendering, or build and charge. That is what it is doing because it wants to avoid a political problem of its own making.

There is one thing that encouraged me today from the Treasurer's comments in the newspaper. The Treasurer said that she would be moving to address the issue of headworks charges for developers across Queensland to try to address the issue of the runaway housing costs in this state. I actually support that. That is something I suggested when I was Leader of the Opposition a couple of years ago when I addressed the Urban Development Institute. We should be ensuring consistency in the charges applied by local government across Queensland to developers to ensure that there is a proper fee for the recovery of reasonable costs of establishing headworks, not seeing a situation of revenue being gathered for other purposes. I actually support what the Deputy Premier is doing there. We need to ensure a consistent approach rather than bludgeoning local government with regard to what it may or may not be able to do—so working with local government, not bludgeoning them.

I also challenge the government to match the coalition's policy when it comes to going a little bit further. We now know that we have extraordinary revenues coming into Queensland, unbudgeted for revenues, as a consequence of the resources boom. We have an extraordinary amount of money which is coming in in the form of GST and we have an extraordinary amount of money which is coming in in the form of untied grants from the Commonwealth—moneys which are over and above what the government has budgeted for to the tune of hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. It is time to be innovative. It is time to be creative. It is time to move towards the abolition of all stamp duty in Queensland. If the government wants to start an economic boom that will continue into the future then it should do this.

Look at what Dubai is doing at the moment. It realises that its oil reserves are finite. So what it is doing is creating an economy post oil reserves. It is creating an economy that will make Dubai the commerce, tourism and investment centre of the Middle East. So it is applying that now.

**Mr Lucas:** What's the size of Dubai in area compared to Queensland?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** A lot bigger than the government's innovation and the minister's capacity to think outside the square. Dubai realises that it faces a changing reality in its world. It is as simple as this: we know that the resources boom may be finite. We know that there should be a chance for us to continue what is going on in Queensland. If the government wants to have a proper population policy in Queensland and plan for the future, as the member for Hervey Bay talked about a moment ago, then the government should use its taxation policy to drive population policy and investment policy in Queensland. It should move towards abolishing stamp duty. It should phase it out over a period of time and extraordinary investment will come into Queensland. What we lose along the way we will pick up on the roundabout in other forms of growth revenue. The minister knows that to be the case, as happened when death duties were abolished in Queensland. It makes the normal transaction of a business or a household attractive to people as they may wish to move somewhere, buy somewhere or locate their business.

The problem with government members such as the member for Lytton is that they are stuck in a typical Labor paradigm of not being able to think outside the square when it comes to something like this. While this gravy train of economic boom lasts, while this resources boom continues, they think it is fine and do not worry about it down the track. One day all things turn around, and we have to start planning for that now. That is what I am saying.

I want to touch on the Clean Coal Technology Special Agreement Bill. We have heard the honourable member who spoke prior to me talk about the necessity for Queensland, as a major coal exporting state in a major coal exporting nation, to do something to plan to meet our greenhouse commitments. He made the statement that we contribute to what is the greatest contributor to greenhouse gases in the world—that is, the burning of fossil fuels. That in fact is absolute and complete bunkum. Those opposite will not find any evidence to back that up. The greatest emitter of greenhouse emissions—being carbon dioxide—is our oceans as they heat up, followed by volcanoes, followed by rotting vegetation, followed by what comes from microbes and animals and then it comes back to industry. They are the facts. We can argue the extent to which we are actually contributing to this, but the unarguable fact is that the greatest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions come from our oceans, from the volcanoes, from vegetation breakdown and then they go down from there. Certainly we make a contribution, but it is just that—a contribution.

I am going to say something in this time of climate change and global warming hysteria which will be unable to be judged here today. The global warming McCarthyists who sit opposite, who actually view anyone who challenges this theory of global warming as a heretic, will not be able to appropriately judge this contribution until such time as a condolence motion on my passing is being spoken to at some future time. Those of my generation sitting in this parliament and those a little bit older than me will remember this: in the four decades post the Second World War, between 1940 and 1970, when the earth's carbon dioxide levels actually rose significantly and our temperature fell by half a degree, there was all of this amazing, spectacular scandal about a second ice age. It was being talked about. There was going to be a second ice age because our world had actually cooled down in the previous 40 years.

We all remember it—those opposite remember it; I remember it. We were told that in our schools, we were told that in print. The BBC actually did a documentary, *The Weather Makers*, on it. What happened? It did not happen. Then the world started to warm up and now we have gone into the global warming climate change phase and we are involved in this particular hysteria. An hysterical approach to this will not solve any problems.

I enjoy science; it is something I look at a lot. I actually enjoy astronomy. One thing that concerns me is that the government and many other people involved in the global warming industry actually subjugate what we know as established science about what is the major contributor to global warming and has been for as long as we know and that is solar activity—that is, sunspot activity. That is the greatest contributor and that is an absolute scientific fact.

We have heard a lot from Al Gore. I have read *An Inconvenient Truth*. It would do the minister for transport good to read it. Al Gore talks about the Vostok ice cores and what they actually show in relation to global warming and carbon dioxide build-up. What he said is true; there is a correlation if one looks at the spikes. But I would challenge members to look at the analysis of the research of the Vostok ice cores. It states that it is true that we have an unprecedented amount of carbon dioxide in our air at the moment. Over 300,000 years ago it was similar, but not quite the same. It states—

According to Barnola ...

and there are some other references there—

... these measurements indicate that, at the beginning of the deglaciations—

that is, the breakdown of the ice age—

the CO<sub>2</sub> increase either was in phase or lagged by less than ~ 1,000 years with respect to the Antarctic temperature, whereas it clearly lagged behind the temperature on the onset of the glaciations.

What that means is that global warming actually causes and contributes to the CO<sub>2</sub> build-up. When it cools the CO<sub>2</sub> falls away as a consequence. Members should look at that research because that should be driving the way we prepare ourselves to respond, rather than hysteria.