



Speech by

Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY SPECIAL AGREEMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION BILLS

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (11.40 pm): I am very happy to contribute to this debate tonight on the cognate bills. This year has seen an unprecedented level of revenue coming into the Treasury, but the overall picture for local infrastructure, services and capital works—particularly if one lives in north Queensland—could be described as very bleak.

This year the Burdekin electorate received various capital infrastructure funds which I genuinely welcome. It is noticeable, though, that none of these projects are new. The previously announced redevelopment of the Murray Sports Complex in Townsville at \$12.3 million is very welcome, as is the continuing funding of \$163.8 million for the final stages of the men's and women's correctional centre at Stuart.

I particularly welcome the two new police stations in the Burdekin electorate at Ayr and Stuart. Funding for the Ayr Police Station of \$6.9 million this year should see the completion of that building early next year as it is already underway. Funding for the police station at Stuart was allocated last year, and I understand that this building will also be completed early next year. That this station has been upgraded to a 24-hour station is very welcome and certainly much needed. The relocation of the traffic branch to this station is also going to add to its significance. Provided that staffing numbers are made available, this will be a very positive move for policing in the northern end of this electorate.

The allocation of \$28 million towards the Abbot Point coal terminal, which is due for completion towards the end of this year, and \$410.9 million to build the rail loop for the new Sonoma coalmine is a step in the right direction. Funding for the Water for Bowen project though is almost nonexistent. Why are these people ignored yet again? If water and electricity were readily available at Abbot Point, we would see business enterprises knocking each other down to come. When will this government look ahead and plan for the future?

I am disappointed that there was no mention of funding for any schools or other government buildings. There are 34 schools in the electorate and an agricultural college campus that are all desperate for capital works. The same seems to apply right across regional Queensland. So it becomes very noticeable where the money has gone—70 per cent of all capital works spending is in south-east Queensland. Again, we see the government shunning and ignoring the needs of the north. I was disappointed that primary industries did not seem to appear in the Treasurer's speech and that shows how much importance she puts on that department.

Mr Mickel: What about Smart State? That was in her speech. That has primary industries in it.

Mrs MENKENS: Not a lot. North Queenslanders are asking the questions: why are we being taxed so much, why is the debt so high and why are the services so bad? The majority of the resources boom and wealth generation comes from north Queensland and it has received no infrastructure funds that assist in new economic development in return.

The budget is a sham. There are record amounts of tax revenue and record debt, yet where has the money gone? Queensland is no longer a low-tax state. State taxation last financial year exceeded the GST and has increased more than 80 per cent under Beattie Labor. GST revenue has increased 60 per cent since 2001. This is an unprecedented level of revenue, and Labor is embarking on a debt that our children and future generations will have to repay.

Mr Lawlor: And our children's children.

Mrs MENKENS: Yes, our children's children; that is right. The state government's net debt in 2010 is forecast to be over \$12 billion. This means that the government will have to find over \$1 billion per annum just to pay the interest. This Labor government has proved that it cannot manage public finances and the economy—and it is a socialist way of management.

A government member: Who told you to say that?

Mrs MENKENS: I learnt to say that a long time ago. They know the socialist way. They know all about that.

Last month I launched the Queensland coalition's discussion paper on climate change. One of the many recommendations within it states that 'the Queensland government needs to get serious about clean coal technology and follow industry's lead and advice'. To that extent I welcome a commitment from this government to actually acknowledge and make progress on this technology.

The purpose of the Clean Coal Technology Special Agreement Bill 2007 is to establish the Clean Coal Council and to authorise the Premier to enter into the Queensland Clean Coal Agreement. It is imperative that government policy must encompass the integration of social, economic and ecological factors for environmentally and economically sustainable development in Queensland. This approach to the environment is necessary in Queensland to provide the foundation for the development of strong, healthy and diverse human communities now and in the future.

The 1987 United Nations environment report *Our common future* first put forth the idea that economic development and ecological sustainability can coexist. The coalition has made this idea core environmental policy as we believe that, with careful planning, we can provide a sustainable future for Queensland. Although many natural factors influence the earth's climate, a large number of the world's scientists believe that greenhouse gas increases—

Mr Mickel: What do you think about tree clearing? That's a different environment.

Mr Lawlor: That's different, isn't it? Tree clearing—you love it.

Mrs MENKENS: I think I will ignore the crowd over there. It is the simplest thing to do. Greenhouse gas increases are believed by many scientists to be the main factor contributing to global warming over the last 50 years. This has been attributed to carbon dioxide and other gases. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2001 stated that 'there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities'. But there are many differing viewpoints on this issue. In simple terms, there is a harsh reality that with increased industrialisation we are pumping far too much unnecessary carbon into the atmosphere.

Climate change has the potential to affect all of us. The community is concerned and it wants all governments to act. But a major problem is weighing up all the conflicting views and opinions about what needs to be done. Coal is a major fuel source in most parts of the world and certainly in Queensland. It is the major fuel source within the stationary energy sector. In Queensland the stationary energy sector is by far the greatest producer of greenhouse emissions. Figures in 2004 show that these emissions have doubled since 1990.

Climate change has taken a central role at both state and federal government levels in recent years, and the development of clean coal technology is certainly part of that. We must ensure that all solutions are practical, achievable and, importantly, protect our future economic prosperity. New clean coal technologies are attempting to address the problem so that the world's enormous resources of coal can be utilised for future generations without contributing to global warming. One of the biggest problems with the technology is the cost, and the major challenge will be being able to produce clean coal power at a competitive price.

This bill will allow the Clean Coal Council to be formed to make recommendations to the Premier on the allocation of funds equivalent to those raised from Queensland producers from the COAL21 Fund for the research, development and demonstration of clean coal technologies. As has been said before, it will authorise the Premier to enter the Queensland Clean Coal Agreement with the ACALET group. The bill, together with the agreement, will give the Premier the final decision on which projects are funded and the amount that is going to be provided from the COAL21 Fund.

The Australian Coal Council seemingly has given support to the Queensland Clean Coal Agreement but only after various threats by the Premier to raise coal royalties. The coal council no doubt had no option but to come on board. The bill and the agreement give the Premier the final say on how and with what priorities et cetera these funds will be expended. Bearing in mind that these funds are coming from

industry as well as the state, it does seem to be an overarching power control tactic. Taking control of non-government funds by the Premier is definitely a very questionable action and one has to ask what has happened to the basic principle of democracy, as again this smacks of socialism.

Government members interjected.

Mrs MENKENS: This group do not like being called socialists, do they? The coalition is concerned about the seeming lack of transparency in the process. There is no requirement or indication that council decisions will be made public or be open to independent overview. We see a vehicle where the government can hide its decision-making processes from the public which is very frightening and also shows a very arrogant government in power-hungry control.

A major priority for Queensland is the production of more power, particularly in north Queensland. Various major industry players are waiting for further power generation. The coalition identified this need several years ago and it was a key plank of the coalition's northern development policy that I launched prior to the last election.

The Queensland coalition has been pushing hard for a coal-fired power station in the north and Collinsville has been identified as an eminently suitable place. I got very excited a couple of days ago when I heard the Minister for Natural Resources and Water announcing that a new north Queensland power station should be up and running by 2012. I will repeat those words because that is what he said—a north Queensland power station should be up and running by 2012. I was very disappointed when he backed away from these claims in parliament on Tuesday.

It seems very obvious that he let the cat out of the bag early this week and has been desperately covering up since. Lots of rhetoric and hot air again from this minister. Then there was the very intriguing media release sent out by this same minister claiming that I do not support the concept of a baseload power station for Collinsville. What a ridiculous statement and one that is so totally untrue. It is similar to previous accusations that he made in 2006 when he accused me of wrongly supporting industry at Abbot Point because he thought it was not in the electorate of Burdekin. In fact, to quote his words, 'The member for Burdekin was actually not working for her area but was sprouting for an area that does not even seem to be in her electorate.' I think we have improved his geography since then, but again he is showing his basic ignorance of the facts on record and he should be ashamed of himself.

I suggest that he sprouted government information that he was not supposed to and he is trying to cover his tracks. If this government puts a clean coal baseload power station in Collinsville drawing water from the Urannah Dam it will have achieved a major milestone for north Queensland. Bring it on! I challenge the government to do it. Minister Wallace's part of the deal is to provide the water. Current water supplies are nearly fully allocated. The new Gattonvale storage leaks like a sieve and the only reliable water source for that area will be the Urannah Dam.

I mention to the Leader of the House that it is getting late and that this very late evening we are having is rather unfair and extremely hard on the staff. I do support both of these bills, but I have major concerns about the absolute power that is being given to the Premier in the clean coal legislation.