



Speech by

Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard Thursday, 18 June 2009

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL;
INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT (ASSET RESTRUCTURING AND
DISPOSAL) BILL; FUEL SUBSIDY REPEAL AND REVENUE AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (10.29 pm): 'Here we go,' says the member for Everton. Madam Deputy Speaker O'Neill, I had your protection last time; I seek your shield this time from the member for Everton. I rise this evening to contribute to the cognate debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, the Appropriation Bill, the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Bill—or, for the benefit of the member for Everton, the fire sale bill—and the Fuel Subsidy Repeal and Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill—or, for the benefit of the members opposite, the 'kick 'em when they're down fuel tax bill'. It is in disgust that as a member of this great parliament I have only 20 minutes to talk on these bills tonight. If this government was fair dinkum, I would have had the opportunity to debate the appropriation bills, the fuel tax bill and—

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: There you go! That is not the case, but what can I say? I am not surprised. So much to talk about in so little time. But let us start—

A government member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have got much to say. Let us start with the budget—the budget that will condemn every Queenslander to a decade of debt because of the Bligh government's financial incompetence, a budget that will see every Queenslander pay more for their fuel, a budget that will see every Queenslander pay more for their car registration, a budget that will see every Queenslander slogged with the interest bill accrued by this incompetent government, a budget that will see more Queenslanders unemployed, a budget that will see Queenslanders paying more every time they turn on the tap, a budget that will see every Queenslander paying more for their food and, finally, a budget that will see every Queenslander pay more for electricity.

But I am reminded of a movie made in 2000 starring Laura Linney. I refer to this movie because there has been much talk about movies and singing this week by the Premier and those on the other side, and here is the plot: as children, Sammy and Terry Prescott lost their parents in a car accident. Years later, Sammy, a single mother, still lives in her childhood home while Terry has drifted around the country scraping by—

A government member: What's it called?

Mr BLEIJIE: I will tell the member what it is called. After months of no communication with his sister, Terry is desperate for money and comes to visit her. Upset with Terry's situation, Sammy lends him the money. How sweet. I ask my colleagues on this side of the chamber: what is the name of this movie? What is the name? Have a guess! Do you know what? *You Can Count on Me!* That is it, and where have I heard

this before? Where have I heard this before? On election night! 'Queensland, you can count on me. Queensland, you can count on me.'

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, it is a fiction and fortunately there was a happy ending. But unfortunately this is not Hollywood, and this Queensland budget does not have a happy ending. I ask the Premier: what on earth have the Queensland public got to be thankful for? A record debt? Higher groceries? Higher fuel costs or electricity costs? And to kick them even further, the Premier has the audacity to stand in this place and tell Queensland that her government has a mandate for these taxes.

Mr Watt: Hear, hear!

Mr BLEIJIE: 'Hear, hear!' Hansard will note the member for Everton saying, 'Hear, hear!' when I said it has a mandate for higher taxes. 'Hear, hear!' he says. Madam Deputy Speaker—this will really get them cracking—I said in this place in my inaugural speech that one of my political heroes was Sir Robert Menzies.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Hinchinbrook.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms O'Neill): Order! A little less, if you please.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for your shield, Madam Deputy Speaker. I said Sir Robert Menzies was one of my political heroes, and this is why—I will remind members; it was in my maiden speech—

What may be before us we do not know, nor how long the journey. But this we do know, that Truth is our companion on that journey; that Truth is with us in the battle, and that Truth must win.

I submit to this House that, God willing, the truth will win this battle in 2½ to three years time.

In terms of the budget, I want to discuss what is not in it for the Sunshine Coast, and I can preface this debate by saying that if the Premier and the Treasurer were planning a trip to my electorate any time soon—which I would doubt because they could not get there during the campaign—

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will get to the Minister for Child Safety, and I have got all good acknowledgements for the Minister for Child Safety. If the Premier and Treasurer came to my electorate they would be met with angst from the Kawana voters, and not just people who voted for the LNP or the Greens but ALP voters as well. The Kawana branch of the ALP came out—

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: This is important, children. Listen! That has been withdrawn if I have offended anyone—withdrawn if I have offended the government. The Kawana branch of the ALP came out this week as if it had been stabbed in the back by a close friend and, of course, this was true. I am of course talking about the inept decision to delay the Sunshine Coast University Hospital by two to three years.

It is interesting that I was attacked by ALP supporters in the last election campaign who said that I would not ensure that the Sunshine Coast University Hospital in Kawana was delivered on time. Little did anyone know that the government never intended to go ahead with the original plan anyway. We have a situation where a Labor Party candidate who ran against me serves on the board planning this very hospital, and this particular person came out this week attacking the government over its ludicrous decision. For the record, I phoned her two nights ago and congratulated her on taking a stance against this government. If only the members for Bundamba and Waterford were more vocal in their opposition to aspects of this budget! In fact, I would love to see the media releases coming from the new members of parliament opposite to explain to their constituents all of these extra taxes—or have they been silenced?

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely. The new member for Chatsworth certainly has not been silenced, from listening to his rabble tonight. What surprised me was the member discussing the buying of strategic assets to increase in value. I would hope that the member for Chatsworth does not consider the government's decision to sell these assets amidst a global financial crisis as wise. That is not strategic asset selling; that is stupidity! It distresses me that the Treasurer and the government do not take seriously the health of Queenslanders. The Sunshine Coast University Hospital is a major piece of infrastructure that is required now. This budget is the biggest slap in the face to Sunshine Coast residents that I have ever seen. The Treasurer was recently discussing the Queensland economy with Michael Smith on 4BC when he said—

Mr Kilburn: Now, there's the voice of wisdom!

Mr BLEIJIE: If he is not a voice of wisdom, why does the member's government continue to be interviewed by him? The Treasurer said—

Why are we doing all of this? It's not about the next five minutes; it's about protecting jobs. It's about building an infrastructure program that supports an economy that is reeling from the effects of the global financial crisis.

Apparently, the government wants to protect jobs and build infrastructure—but just not on the Sunshine Coast! The history of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital is quite extraordinary. One minute we had it being built at Sippy Downs and then it was moved to Kawana Waters. The budget, like most things this government touches, always blows out of control. On 27 August 2008 the health minister at the time answered a question without notice put to him by my colleague the member for Maroochydore. This was the minister's answer—

I would back our response to growth pressures on the Sunshine Coast before the opposition's any day of the week. What are we doing on the Sunshine Coast? We are getting on and building the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital, which will have 650 beds. Now, members opposite, listen carefully to this part—

It would have been very easy for us to just announce a brand-new tertiary hospital for the Sunshine Coast and do nothing between now and when it opens.

That is exactly what has happened: nothing has happened and it has now been delayed by three years. It gets better. On 11 February this year, the health minister then advised the House—

... the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and the Queensland Children's Hospital—all remain on track. These major projects will create the equivalent of more than 25,600 full-time jobs over their construction life.

Now we are faced with years of delay. Perhaps the new Minister for Health will have to advise the Treasurer to take the 25,000-plus jobs off the 100,000 jobs creation target. In April this year, a spokesman for Queensland Health confirmed to the *Sunshine Coast Daily* that the hospital would be built by 2014. The health minister in the same article, which I will table, said—

The LNP's Brisbane centric view would jeopardise hospital construction elsewhere in Queensland.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, dated 25 April 2009, titled 'Bleijie cast doubt on Kawana hospital' [443].

Can I say to the members of the House that it is not the LNP that jeopardised this hospital; it is the Labor Party. What concerns me and what I still cannot work out is what has changed in the past 21 days since I asked the minister a question on notice with respect to the hospital. This would have been an ideal time to tell the people of the Sunshine Coast what the delay was. It was only 21 days ago. The minister did not explain it and I want to know why the government could not explain it. Surely, the Minister for Health does not get rolled by the Cabinet Budget Review Committee weekend meetings, as happened to the transport minister.

During the election campaign, and even in the House today, the term 'DNA' was raised often. Political DNA refers to the values and beliefs of an individual. What the government failed to tell the people of Queensland during the election campaign was, of course, that its DNA was to jeopardise the health of Queenslanders, to delay much needed infrastructure like the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and to put the jobs of Queenslanders at risk by selling off vital government assets. These assets seem to be regarded by the government as subsidiary. Whilst they cost money to run, they make a return on the capital investment as well.

The members of the Australian Labor Party regard themselves as the champion of workers and working families. Yes, this is when it suits them. They have set quite an ambitious target of 100,000 jobs to be created in this term. The opposition will hold them to that promise. The government will try to create these jobs through infrastructure projects. But now these jobs are being delayed. The Sunshine Coast University Hospital at Kawana is a prime example. On the one hand we have the government promising to invest in public works programs but on the other hand we see the delays in vital health projects and cuts to other projects. In my electorate, these include the relocation of the Kawana water police, the only water police facility on the Sunshine Coast. There was \$3 million budgeted for the relocation of this facility last year and that allocation has been deleted and replaced with \$100,000. Where has the \$2.9 million gone? The water police deserve an explanation from this government as to why it would make the relocation virtually an impossibility.

Quite surprisingly, I find in the budget an allocation for the Sippy Downs Police Station. The allocation for this station was in last year's budget. It is not new funding, but the government seems to have chopped in half the estimated cost of this project. The original estimated budget for this police station was \$5.5 million. Now it is down to \$2.4 million. The government must come clean and explain to the people of Sippy Downs how their police station will be impacted by this reduction.

I am also disappointed that the government did not put any money on the table for the Sunshine Coast Regional Council Stockland Park grandstand. The federal government has contributed to this project, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council has contributed to this project but, as yet, we have not seen anything from the state government. I would, however—

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member wanted some thanks; I am going to give some thanks here, so he should settle down. I would, however, like to thank the Minister for Sport for visiting the electorate recently on a tour of the site. The Sunshine Coast does not have any stadiums, it does not have any grandstands, but it has a large population that continues to grow. For the information of the member for Everton, I recall—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! The member for Cook will resume his seat and cease interjecting from the floor.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Let us look at the track record of Labor governments in this state. When the state was booming owing to an increase in mining royalties and rising property markets, this government went bust. Instead of putting money back into the bank like the federal Costello-Howard government did, what did this government do? It squandered it. Quite simply, this government went bust in a boom. Then we had the broken promises. Electricity prices have tripled. The government said they would not. 'No taxes will be introduced,' said the Treasurer earlier this year. Now we see the fuel tax. We see an increase in registration costs for Queensland motorists. The only DNA Labor governments have is to mislead the constituents. We have seen it with federal Labor governments and we see it with this government.

A government member: What is the solution?

Mr BLEIJIE: Here is the solution. I think that sometimes the Labor Party forgets what is actually in its DNA of today. 'D' equals debt, 'N' equals negligence and 'A' equals arrogance. For the benefit of the members opposite, I table a copy—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. The member for Cook will return to his seat if he wishes to interject.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the benefit of the members opposite, I table a copy of Labor's DNA today: 'D' for debt, because it always happens; 'N' for negligence, because they should and will be held responsibility for letting it happen; and 'A' for arrogance, because it is never their fault.

Tabled paper: A document showing an image and bearing the words 'D=Debt, N=negligent and A=Arrogance' [444].

I will use this opportunity to speak about the fire sale of assets by this Bligh Labor government. This decision is one reeking of desperation. The government has introduced legislation that goes against the very principles of its party. One of the core values of the Labor Party is that the privatisation of public enterprises should not be used to solve revenue problems. The ALP statement of beliefs states—

Privatisation of public enterprises should not be used to solve revenue problems.

Members of parliament, this government has some huge revenue problems and the fire sale of these assets should not be used to pay those debts.

This government is out of ideas. The Premier says that they have a plan. They clearly do not. I might add that, of all the members opposite who have spoken tonight, not many have raised Queensland Rail, not many have spoken about the fuel tax, not many have spoken about the sale of the biggest assets in Queensland. I ask the member for Hinchinbrook: I wonder why that is? Wasn't the ALP state conference disappointing! As the member for Southern Downs aptly indicated on Wednesday, the QCU wilted like a punnet of pansies. The Premier had to ensure that the vote passed by demanding that 45 members of her branch abstain from the vote to limit the embarrassment. Unfortunately, the QCU has the same contempt for Queensland jobs as does the Queensland government.

Every government has a legacy by which it will be known by the people. This government's legacy will clearly be one of debt, debt and more debt and its inability to pay back that debt. We were once the envy of Australia with our economy. We cannot say that anymore. The fuel tax that will be imposed by this government will increase inflation by over one per cent. This effect will be felt immediately. At a time when the economy is struggling and the world's financial markets are down, governments should be trying to extend an olive branch to their people, not hitting them over the head with it.

It seems the norm this week to quote songs, and particularly for government members to quote songs.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, that was a movie. Being the amateur karaoke performer that I am, this pleases me immensely. It also gives me an opportunity to quote one of my favourite songs. The song is aptly titled *What about me?*

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hear a challenge to sing it—

What about me? It isn't fair

I've had enough. Now I want my share

Can't you see? I wanna live

But you just take more than you give.

This is what the Queensland public want to know. They want to know why this government takes more than it gives. They want to know: what about me? They want a fair share.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind all members that that is unparliamentary.