



Speech by

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QUEENSLAND ECONOMY

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This afternoon at 2.30 the final moment of reckoning will be here. We will hear the confession of the honourable member for South Brisbane and the honourable member for Mount Coot-tha, who will admit and reveal everything that Labor hid from Queenslanders just three months ago. This morning in her first ministerial statement the Premier spoke about our population growth being greater than that of any other state, with 2,000 people moving to Queensland every week over the last year. That has been the crux of the problem for this state for the past 20 years—that is, this government did not plan for population growth. It failed to plan for infrastructure.

The Premier and the Treasurer love to talk about the global financial crisis, even though they claim that they found out about the details of it only after 22 March. This morning we have already heard the shadow Treasurer say that in June last year the Premier ruled out bringing in a fuel tax in order to support struggling Queensland families.

Last year Queensland Investment Corporation chief Doug McTaggart said that a global storm—a perfect storm—was bearing down on the Queensland economy. At that time the *Gold Coast Bulletin* quoted the Treasurer as saying that the cyclone bolts were in place, the bungs were in the tinnie and the masking tape was on the windows. He implied that the Queensland government was prepared for what was coming. He gave no hint of what was going to come in terms of the promises Labor made during the election campaign.

Since the election campaign of 21 March we have heard about growing deficits, falling revenue, a massive sell-off of state assets, a new fuel tax, rising state government charges and cuts to Public Service pay rises. Now, of course, there is a brawl with public sector unions over wages, and yesterday we heard about the announced cuts to subsidies for councils for water and sewerage infrastructure charges in the years to come.

That is why Queenslanders feel so ripped off as we approach 2.30 this afternoon. It is like a convulsion of two movies that I remember from my youth: *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Sting*. After 2.30 we will see Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, the Premier and the Treasurer, ride off into the sunset having played out the final element of the sting. This will be the final scene that was first set up during the election campaign. The sting is asking the people of Queensland for their vote. That is the big bet that was placed, and the final pay-off will come at 2.30 this afternoon when the 'Sundance Kid', the member for Mount Coot-tha, delivers his budget. Having taken for granted the trust and the vote of the people of Queensland, he will ride off into the sunset. Labor thinks it can say whatever it likes in an election campaign and do whatever it likes afterwards and the people of Queensland will not remember.

Let us look at the responsibility of this Treasurer. He loves to quote from old-time budgets, he loves to use esoteric words to show off his great intellect and he loves to talk about intellectual capacity. Let us look at his record and compare it to those of other Labor treasurers in the Beattie and Bligh governments: David Hamill, Terry Mackenroth, Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh, who was the Treasurer before the current Treasurer. Really, it was when the member for South Brisbane, Anna Bligh, was Treasurer that spending

by this government went out of control. The 'Sundance Kid', the member for Mount Coot-tha, has not been able to rein in that spending. Last year's statistics show that revenue for this government went up by one per cent but spending went up by 10 per cent. How on earth can that happen? In fact, over the past four years, from 2006 to the end of the next financial year, spending by this government is budgeted to have gone up by 52 per cent. Which Queensland families are doing that? Which Queensland businesses are doing that?

I put it to the House that the 'Sundance Kid', the member for Mount Coot-tha, is the weakest and most incompetent Treasurer this state has seen under the Bligh and Beattie governments, yet he loves to come in here and talk about intellectual capacity. He has broken every promise he has made. A month before the election he promised the people of Queensland that there would be no fuel tax; now we know that we are getting a fuel tax that will impact on all Queenslanders. After 1 July, every time you fill your car, every time you buy food at the supermarket, every time you turn on the tap or flick on the lights, you will pay more because of the 'Sundance Kid', the member for Mount Coot-tha. He loves to come in here and talk, but what he has delivered are massive cost increases to the people of Queensland because he could not rein in government spending as he was too daunted by the former Treasurer, the member for South Brisbane. Clearly we have a massive and constant increase in recurrent expenditure that the Treasurer has been unable to rein in. He is the weakest and most incompetent Treasurer that we have seen.

Costs are out of control, and the time for blaming the global financial crisis and everyone else is over. Anna Bligh and Andrew Fraser chose to lie to the people of Queensland. They are breaking the promises that they made just three weeks ago. They racked up \$64 billion of debt before the global financial crisis was even heard of. Yesterday Queensland's most respected banker as head of the Queensland Treasury Corporation, Sir Leo Hielscher, said that Queensland's current debt and the interest that has to be paid because of the loss of our AAA credit rating will cost us the equivalent of a new children's hospital every year, year after year, instead of once in a lifetime.

Last year the Treasurer refused to take the advice that it was important to protect our AAA credit rating. In fact, he was determined to go ahead with massive infrastructure spending, which we on this side supported. As it turns out, yesterday the government revealed that it is not going to be able to spend all of last year's infrastructure budget of \$17 billion. Even that core Labor promise will not be fulfilled.

Of course, we all know that on 21 March the Premier and the Treasurer promised Queenslanders that they could count on them. The greatest of all their promises was the creation of 100,000 jobs. What did we see last week? Up to 121,700 Queenslanders are now unemployed. In May last year 83,000 Queenslanders were unemployed. I believe that most Queenslanders watching the television coverage of the lead-up to the 21 March election would have had no idea that 106,000 Queenslanders were unemployed. Clearly that promise has gone by the wayside. The Premier and the Treasurer are now mouthing platitudes about unemployed Queenslanders, but what are they doing? They are increasing the costs on businesses and making it more difficult for people working in the tourism, construction and development industries. Clearly, everything they said was aimed simply at winning the election, which is why Queenslanders now feel that they have been the subject of a big sting.

Finally, I want to refer to a letter that I wrote to the Treasurer, seeking some advice about today's budget and the arrangements pertaining to the opposition. The Treasurer says—

I look forward to next week's debate on the 2009-10 budget as I anticipate you will be in a position to propose policy propositions rather than merely reflexively and unthoughtfully opposing the budget. As you know, I consider you have this capacity despite the position you adopted last week.

He is referring to the last parliamentary sitting week. I do not need to hear patronising comments about capacity from the worst and weakest Treasurer in Queensland's history. As for policy propositions, I oppose poor financial management and stewardship. Here are some more policy propositions: do not say one thing before an election, thinking that you can change it all afterwards because the people of Queensland will not remember; do not mislead the people about the debt situation that you put us in; do not rule out taxes in the month before an election and then introduce one three months later; do not try to kid the people that you found out the true situation the day after an election—the Treasurer is playing us all for fools; do not tell people that they will not be worse off and then increase the price of electricity, water and everything else and then come in here crying tiger tears about it; do not tell people that they can count on you when clearly they cannot; and do not give people trite statements—such as we heard from the honourable the Treasurer the other day—that a low-tax state is a low-service state.

Queensland is the state that I grew up in. It has always been proud of the services it has been able to provide. It has always prided itself on being able to deliver those services through a tax regime and a balanced budget that the coalition brought in in 1989. It has taken 20 years for Labor to ruin the budgetary situation in Queensland, but it has managed to do it now. That is always the way with Labor. Labor members always come in and say that they will not do something but then they do. We have seen it with Kevin Rudd. They are all about deceit and debt. That is what this lot are all about.

As I say, I do not need lectures from the weakest and most incompetent Treasurer, who should go and get a real job because he has never had a job. All he has ever done is work for other politicians and then he comes in here and thinks that by using big words he impresses us. The people of Queensland are ready and waiting for this lot when we go to the next election. We will not forget.