



Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Friday, 19 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 CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (5.35 pm): I rise to add to the debate. We have heard many times over the last few days that this budget is diabolical. It is a budget that is going to cost my children, my grandchildren and—God forbid—most likely my great-grandchildren. We are on the edge—no, we are probably over the edge. We are probably in a position now where we will never be debt free. By 2013 our debt is estimated to be \$85.5 billion. That is 85½ thousand million dollars. Write it out in your mind: eighty-five, five, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero. It is a sickening thought that this government is leaving that debt for our children's children to worry about. When it comes to this state's debt, the question that the people of my electorate, the Coomera electorate, are asking is: what is in it for them? That is a natural enough question. It is a question that all Queenslanders would be asking.

Ms Croft: Hope Island Road.

Mrs Keech: I got you a TAFE.

Mr CRANDON: The answer is simple: not very much that is positive, member for Albert. We have got no relief. They are already building the Hope Island Road and we are counting it again. It is going around and around and around.

We have no relief for Exit 38, Exit 41, Exit 54 and Exit 57 on the M1. The answer there is: continue to suffer the frustrations and the safety issues. Continue to be in a traffic jam on Stapylton-Jacobs Well Road just to get on the highway at Exit 38, because there is nothing in this budget to provide relief. Continue to run the risk of a horrific accident at Exit 41 because of the traffic that backs up onto the M1 when all you want to do is get to work. You are running the risk of being tail ended. Expect to be logjammed at Exit 54 for the foreseeable future when all you want to do is drop your children off at school. Continue to be stuck for three or four light changes on Hope Island Road at Exit 57 when all you want to do is get onto the M1 to head north, or once again drop your children off at school. Imagine being in a traffic jam for an hour just to take your children to school five, six or seven kilometres away.

There is nothing in this budget to relieve any of these problems. We have some planning money to expand the Ormeau Woods State High School. That is some good news. We have the money to build the new TAFE precinct at Coomera—more good news, and proof and recognition of what is happening in the area. There have been announcements about a new primary school and discussions about a new high school.

The Coomera electorate in the northern Gold Coast corridor is right in the middle of the fastest growing region in Queensland and Australia. As such, it beggars belief that the Minister for Transport and

member for Ipswich had the audacity to say in this House on Wednesday when discussing Queensland Rail rolling stock—

We acted on the results of the 2008 survey that indicated that the greatest need was on the Ipswich and Caboolture lines on weekday mornings.

The minister and member for Ipswich went on to say—

The Bligh government added five new morning peak services to the Ipswich line and three to the Caboolture line, since they were identified as priorities last year.

The minister and member for Ipswich stated that this provided capacity for an additional 6,000 people each weekday and that the reduction in crowding on the Ipswich line dropped from 58 per cent to 23 per cent. I am delighted for the people of Ipswich, but it beggars belief that the minister and member for Ipswich is reading the same report that I am reading. I would like to table a copy of the report now. It is the report that the minister and member for Ipswich released on Monday of this week.

Tabled paper: Report titled 'Passenger Load Survey Q1-2009' [457].

The report that I have been reading—this report—which contains the last five years' figures, does not identify the Ipswich line, which the minister and member for Ipswich states was the one with the greatest need. In fact, the line with the greatest need was and still is the Gold Coast line, specifically the stations from Ormeau to Robina. Passenger numbers on the Ipswich line increased between 2005 to 2009 from 5,939 passengers to 8,133 passengers, an increase of 37 per cent. More recently, the increase in passenger numbers on the Ipswich line from 2007 to 2008 was 4.5 per cent and from 2008 to 2009 it was 2.5 per cent. This is all in the report. The increase from 2005 to 2009 on the Gold Coast line was from 1,637 passengers to 3,430, an increase of 110 per cent. The increase from 2007 to 2008 on the Gold Coast line was 27.8 per cent versus 4.5 per cent on the Ipswich line and for 2008 to 2009 it was 15 per cent versus 2.5 per cent on the Ipswich line.

The minister and member for Ipswich is quite correct in the statement made on Wednesday that the percentage of overloading on the Ipswich line dropped from 58 per cent to 23 per cent year on year. As the minister stated in a press release last Sunday—

... the comfort design capacity was a measure of the number of people a train could hold, while maintaining passenger comfort. For QR's six-car train sets, the comfort design capacity is 750 people, sitting and standing.

During the same period overloading on the Gold Coast line—the line from Ormeau to Robina—increased from 83 per cent to 86 per cent. So whilst overcrowding on the Ipswich line dropped from 58 per cent to 23 per cent, in the same period it rose on the Gold Coast line from 83 per cent to 86 per cent. It is going backwards on the Gold Coast. Based on the figures in the report, the Gold Coast line was by far the most overloaded line.

The minister and member for Ipswich has been caught out in a deliberate untruth. Surely the minister and member for Ipswich has blatantly favoured the Ipswich line, which did not have the greatest need according to the report referred to. The solution could be in the budget.

Page 117 of Budget Paper No. 3 talks about 102 new three-car units in the 2009-10 year for use on the lines between the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The total cost is estimated to be \$155.2 million. That cost will not deliver 102 three-car units notwithstanding the budget paper's words. In fact, it will most likely deliver 10 or 12 three-car units. I wait with great anticipation to see the majority of these three-car units as six-car train sets on the line that is most in need according to that very same report, and that line is the Gold Coast line.

With the new Varsity Lakes station coming online in the new year, I know as do other honourable members that we will have an even greater need with even more people using the peak hour services. The increase in fuel prices through the fuel tax scheduled to come into being on 1 July will also be the tipping point for many people. People will be forced onto the rail service, which will further increase the overloading of the Gold Coast service.

I would like to take this opportunity to call on the member for Albert and, for that matter, the member for Waterford to support me in demanding that the rolling stock that we desperately need be delivered. The member for Albert is particularly affected by these issues as many of the people using the train stations in the electorate I represent, the Coomera electorate, come from the Albert electorate, which is on the other side of the M1. I wish that, when much of the new electorate of Coomera was still in the Albert electorate, the member for Albert had been able to convince the minister and Queensland Rail that the Gold Coast line was then, and still is, most needed.

It is about time that this government stopped ignoring the fastest growing region in the state. This government came to power on the mantra that it is all about jobs, jobs, jobs. I am sorry to say that in the state seat of Coomera we recently saw 450 jobs lost from one firm in the marine precinct. How many other jobs will be lost in the region as a result of this downturn in the industry is difficult to say. I do note an article from the *Gold Coast Bulletin* dated 19 June. In his comments about the budget, the Gold Coast Mayor stated—

There are currently 291,000 Gold Coasters employed, but there are 17,300 who have lost their jobs in the past 12 months.

The article states—

As of April, 2009, the Gold Coast unemployment rate stood at 5.6 per cent, which remains above the state average.

Those figures are before the 450 additional lost jobs and however many more may have gone as a result of the downturn that has occurred since then. The article continues—

According to the council's economic development and tourism department, the financial worth of Gold Coast-listed companies has dropped from \$6.4 billion in 2006 to \$2.5 billion in 2008.

'The marine industry alone has seen a 35 per cent drop in its worth.'

How many other jobs will be lost? Who knows. I can say that they were full-time jobs that were lost. The breadwinners who have lost their jobs will not be able to survive on OJs, or OHJs. They are those one-hour jobs that the government plans to count in its jobs, jobs, jobs mantra. It just will not wash for them. OJs do not add up to BJs, that is breadwinner jobs. Breadwinners need breadwinner jobs.

Mr Finn: OJs?

Mr CRANDON: OJs or OHJs—one hour jobs. We need to remember these people are real people with real needs, and OJs just will not cut it for them. They are not numbers that can be satisfied with OJs.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr CRANDON: Do members opposite like that? Do they like OJs? If we relied on OJs I am afraid that the added cost of fuel would take most of the pay from the OJs anyway, especially given the traffic jam issues where people are sitting there trying to get onto the freeway to get to the job.

I now come to the broader issue of financial management. As a financial planner for almost 22 years, I would often have people come to see me because they were on big incomes but they seemed to be going nowhere. After some discussion and analysis I would often have to ask some tough questions such as, 'Where did the money go? Have you got a gambling problem? The numbers don't stack up. You tell me your income is X. You tell me your expenditure is Y and yet you have this diabolical debt. The numbers just do not stack up.' Quite often the big income caused an almost manic spending pattern. Does this sound familiar—the last 10 years, a manic spending pattern?

These people were earning big money and they wanted a big lifestyle to go with it. Money meant little to them because it was coming so easily. They did not put the checks and balances in place to curb their spending, to put some money away for a rainy day. I would often ask them to go away and do a detailed income and expense analysis over the next little while. I was able to help those who came back. Sadly, many did not come back because they did not want to admit to themselves that there was a problem. They kept kidding themselves and turning a blind eye to their problem, just like we have seen over the past decade or so with this government.

The richest man in Babylon said it so well: save 10 per cent of all you earn and save the interest you earn on that as well. Why does this ring so true? Because we need to save for a rainy day. Life is not all sunshine. There are rainy days, as we well know in the Sunshine State.

Another piece of advice I would give to these clients when they came to see me is do not sell income-producing assets to pay for living expenses. Certainly do not sell assets when the markets are down—buy low, sell high. That is the rule.

If a fictitious 'Mr Treasurer' and his partner 'Ms Premier' came to see me 12 years or so ago, at the beginning of the biggest economic boom this state has ever seen, I would have said to them, 'As a young couple you need to save and invest a percentage of all of the income you are earning. Invest it in some income-producing assets. Put some away as a buffer for the rainy day that will come. As young people you may think that you are 10-foot tall and bulletproof. You are too young to know that the rainy days will come. Take this advice and you will come through the bad times.'

If that young couple had heeded the advice and did not let the boom convince them that the sunshine would never end then Queenslanders would not be paying more every time they turned on a tap, flicked on the lights, filled up their car or went to the supermarket. The days of Queensland being the low-tax, lifestyle capital of Australia would not have ended today. The last 11 years would have seen Queensland grow stronger and stronger. Queensland would continue as the nation's economic powerhouse. Today the Sunshine State is being eclipsed by the budget black hole that condemns Queensland to, at the very least, another decade of debt.

Ten years of the biggest boom in Queensland's 150-year history could have set us up for these tough times. Unfortunately, there is now nothing to show for a decade of boom other than a looming decade of deficits. Queensland would not be contemplating \$85.5 billion of debt. Queensland taxpayers would not be paying \$14 million a day every day in interest on this \$85.5 billion of debt. Remember, Queensland racked up \$64 billion worth of that debt before the rainy days came—when the sun was shining, in the biggest economic boom this state has ever seen. Queensland would not have lost its AAA credit rating and ordinary Queenslanders would not be slugged twice with the fuel tax—once at the bowser

and again at the checkout. Queenslanders would not be paying more for fruit and vegetables. Queenslanders would not be selling profitable assets to fill the massive black hole that this government has put in the balance sheet. Queenslanders would not be selling profitable assets at the bottom of the market. This budget tells the tale of Labor's 11-year record of mismanagement, failure and squandered opportunity.