



Speech by

**Murray Watt**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

Hansard Wednesday, 3 June 2009

---

### **MOTION: QUEENSLAND ECONOMY**

**Mr WATT** (Everton—ALP) (5.59 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in this debate. As I am sure is the case for many members of parliament over the past 24 hours, I have had calls to my electorate office seeking information about the basis for the government's decision. I have been more than happy to return those calls, because this is a decision that was a very hard decision to make but it is the right decision. I stand right behind it.

Some of the questions that my constituents have raised with me in the past 24 hours are similar to some of the questions that have been asked by the opposition here tonight and some of them are similar to questions that sections of the media have asked as well. They are questions such as, 'What did you do with the money from the boom?' We heard the former opposition leader—the next opposition leader—raise that question yet again tonight. He raised it throughout the election campaign and he did it again tonight. I have some news for the former Leader of the Opposition on his question as to what we did with the money from the boom. There was a boom. It did bring in a lot of money and it was used for very good purposes.

I had a look at the surplus in 2006-07. It was one of the good years for the Queensland economy. The coal industry was going very well. Other industries were going well. There was a boom. Do members know what happened that year? We delivered a \$2.3 billion surplus. It was not the only year that we delivered very big surpluses. The most amazing thing about that surplus was that it came after the introduction of the biggest reform to Queensland's education system in decades, which was the delivery of the prep year—something that the opposition did not want to do, but something that this government had the foresight to act on.

Can members imagine the hundreds of millions of dollars that were tied up in delivering new classrooms for the prep year, in delivering more teachers, more teacher aides and more resources into schools? My constituents, all of the opposition's constituents—people right throughout Queensland—are benefiting from the prep year this year, next year and for the next 50 years. The point is that not only were we able to deliver on those very expensive commitments but we also recorded massive surpluses in return. It happened year after year in the earlier part of this decade. Do members know what changed that? The global financial crisis. The other side has just not come to grips with that concept, but it is the absolute truth and I am happy to talk about it with my constituents whenever they would like.

The other issue that has been raised a lot is this accusation that the government lied during the election campaign—that it was only 74 days; what could possibly have changed? Again, I find it very surprising that the opposition makes that comment, because it is well informed, one would think. A couple of very big things have happened within Queensland since the last election. The first of them, as the Premier has mentioned, was that the federal government brought down its budget only about two or three weeks ago. I can understand that as the opposition has been out of power for so long it has forgotten the connection between the federal budget and the state budget, but having been involved in the development of budgets in the past I can say that there is a very big impact. This year the impact was even bigger than usual.

The GST distribution to Queensland dropped by \$2.5 billion in this year's federal budget. I do not know how the opposition could possibly have expected the government to foresee that decrease. I am sure that we were under no illusion that our GST receipts were going to drop but by nowhere near that amount. The Premier has also mentioned the pay rise that has been granted to people working in the community services sector—a very well-deserved pay rise. That is going to cost money. That had a big impact on our budget and we have to come up with the money to pay for that.

I am still waiting for some good evidence from the Liberal National Party of its solution to this problem. We still have not heard anything. Day after day we ask members opposite: what is your solution? They cannot come up with anything. So we have no choice but to look back at what the opposition said during the election campaign. What was the opposition saying? 'Cut, cut, cut.' There was to be a three per cent efficiency dividend right across the public sector. We have seen what its counterparts in Western Australia have done. That efficiency dividend means no bandages for hospitals, cutbacks in schools and cutbacks in road funding. Is that the kind of thing that the opposition really thinks is a good idea? We have no other information to go on. It must still be its policy. All the opposition wants to do is sit back and cut projects. During the state election the opposition never had the gumption to talk about what projects it would cut.

I can only assume what the cuts would mean in my own electorate of Everton. Some of the things that are planned for Everton include the upgrade of the Prince Charles Hospital. That would go under a Liberal National Party. There will be a new children's emergency department at the Prince Charles Hospital, which is very close to my constituents and those on the north side. That would go under the Liberal National Party. Everyone complains about the intersection at the airport. Who is doing something about it? This government! It takes money.

During the election campaign we also committed to increase literacy and numeracy spending for schools. That would go. A new hall at Eatons Hill State School would go. A refurbishment of the performing arts block at Albany Creek High School would go under the Liberal National Party. Resurfacing of Samford Road, which I know the member for Ashgrove is also passionate about, would go. New train carriages for the Ferny Grove line, a new kindergarten at the Prince of Peace Lutheran College—all of these things would go under the Liberal National Party. There is only one government that has the guts to make the hard decisions to pay for those things and that is the Labor government.