



Speech by
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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**

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (10.45 pm): I rise tonight in this chamber to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2009. This week Queenslanders heard a confession—a confession from Anna Bligh and Andrew Fraser that confirms the public's suspicion that Labor hid the state of our finances from the voting public just three months ago and before calling an early election.

Today Queenslanders understand just how financially incompetent this Labor government is and that every man, woman and child has been condemned to a decade of debt because of this incompetence. Queenslanders today understand that when we fill up our cars, buy food at the supermarket, turn on the tap, flick on the lights—basically every daily activity—it is now going to be even more expensive from 1 July thanks to the ineptitude and incompetence of this government.

Andrew Fraser and Anna Bligh misled the public and blamed the state of the economy on the global financial crisis when in fact this government had already racked up over \$64 billion in debt long before the global financial crisis hit and allowed Queensland to go bust in a boom. The time for blaming the global financial crisis is over.

I note the former member for Mudgeeraba in her response to the 2008-09 budget stated the following—

The mark of a good budget is one that delivers essential services and infrastructure that continues to build. It bears the hallmark of fiscal responsibility while looking across the horizon and building for the Queensland of tomorrow.

I refer to the definition of 'fiscal' from the Webster dictionary. It clearly states that it is 'of or relating to taxation, public revenues, or public debt'. This budget certainly speaks to taxation and public debt with little public revenue in sight. This is a high-taxing budget with a blow-out in public debt that Queenslanders will be paying off for many years to come.

We are facing government debt of \$85.5 billion. To put it in simple terms, for an average family of four that is a debt of \$78,000 each. Yes, a massive \$78,000 debt each—not per household but each. It is going to cost Queensland's taxpayers \$14 million a day every day to pay just the interest bill on this \$85.5 billion of debt.

The once proud history of Queensland as the low-tax, lifestyle capital of Australia is now becoming a distant memory. This budget is the result of our economic decline under 11 years of a Labor government. We are the only state in Australia to have lost its AAA credit rating. Having previously been the nation's economic powerhouse, this government should be embarrassed that we are now on a credit watch with Standard & Poor's.

We saw during the election campaign this government use funding from the federal government as part of its election promises. But let us be frank. With its record of financial mismanagement and lack of fiscal responsibility, who else but its friends in federal government could it go to with cap in hand asking for more money? This government has, as quoted by my colleague the shadow Treasurer—

The inability to raise funds overseas without big brother, the federal government, coming in to stand as guarantor; the extra interest payments—\$340 million every year—as a result of the loss of the AAA credit rating.

This state Labor government has had 11 years in office to put away money in the good times to protect us in the bad. This is a government without a plan and without a future. This is a government whose record is one of mismanagement, failure and squandered opportunity.

One needs to look no further than the budget debate speech made by the former member in 2008 to highlight how fiscal mismanagement has led to a budget blow-out, a fire sale and the loss of our credit rating. She stated—

Queensland's strong financial budget position means that we can borrow to build for the future—something every Queenslanders does when the bank agrees they have the capacity. But today we all borrow to build or buy, depending on our income, financial standing and credit rating. In fact, most people find, like me, that the more they earn the more debt they have. That does not mean my children will be paying off my debt.

Our children and their children's children will be paying off this Labor government state debt. Combine this with the \$318 billion federal debt racked up by another renowned Labor spendthrift and the expectation is looking quite bleak for our future generations. Although expected, it is disappointing that election commitments, albeit almost grudgingly given on the eve of the election, have not been honoured. Sadly, this is a situation that many of the long-suffering residents in Mudgeeraba have been getting used to over the past eight years. One week prior to the election we witnessed the spectacle of this government doing a monumental backflip and committing to undergrounding a section of powerlines in Asperia Street in Reedy Creek. This promise only came after months and months of lobbying by locals.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of people power and the residents of Reedy Creek. More than half of the electorate stuck together and looked after their own neighbours, and only then did we finally see this government back-pedal to try to save its marginal seat in Mudgeeraba. I acknowledge Gecko, STOP, the Mudgeeraba Action Group and residents who refused to give up on this issue that saw this Labor government match—yes, match—the LNP's commitment to underground those powerlines in established residential areas and provide relief and certainty for the homeowners in Asperia Street in Reedy Creek.

Only the LNP and the member for Callide responded to the long-running community campaign in the Mudgeeraba electorate with a plan to underground sections of the proposed powerline in Reedy Creek. Only the LNP saw that the extra cost of undergrounding the lines was justified to reduce the collateral impact on the local community, and only the LNP placed high priority in consultation with communities. Residents of Reedy Creek were sick and tired of being treated like second-class citizens by this state Labor government which continually ignored residents' concerns and whose only solution was to move the problem 100 metres away. They threatened to take this issue to the ballot box, and take it to the ballot box they did, culminating in a resounding defeat for Labor in Mudgeeraba. I can assure this government that the residents of Reedy Creek will not go quietly into the night on this issue. The Labor state government made a commitment to them and I will fight tooth and nail to ensure that this commitment is honoured.

That brings me to the long-suffering residents of Lower Beechmont, who have the dubious honour of having the RACQ 2008 worst state road as their claim to fame. Again, only after this became an election issue did this state Labor government backflip and promise—wait for it—only half of what it will actually cost to completely reprofile and resurface this dangerous road. Since December 2008 there have been 17 accidents on this stretch of road, and only just recently a fatality when a local bike rider hit a pothole. I do, however, thank the Minister for Main Roads for responding today to my question on notice from 20 May regarding Beechmont Road. Beechmont and Lower Beechmont residents will be very pleased to hear that the \$2.5 million election commitment is now part of the Roads Implementation Program for 2009-10.

Only last week I met with Main Roads and the Better Roads for Beechmont Group and, through meaningful consultation, we have identified the three most urgent areas to upgrade. I want to thank the Better Roads for Beechmont Group and 85 per cent of the residents of Lower Beechmont who responded to my protest card and the 75 per cent who responded to the member for Beaudesert's protest card, because we share this road together, for without that pressure and dogged determination of a few residents such as Greg McKenzie this would not have been possible.

It is also not surprising to note that there is no mention of secondary education for Mudgeeraba in this budget. Unlike this Labor state government, I stand by the premise that a state high school is needed west of the M1. The former member, who went from highlighting the need for a new state high school in 2001 to categorically stating eight years later that we would not need one for 20 years, said—

Most of my time since my election has been taken up in dealing with education issues in the electorate because I am facing a legacy of neglect and poor planning which has resulted in a situation whereby local primary schools are overflowing. Even new high schools,

such as the one at Robina, are bursting at the seams. A hinterland seat of 26,000 residents has no state high school. I have been visiting my local schools, both public and private, and talking to parents, teachers, principals and students about education resources in the area. I have found that they have been crying out for added facilities to meet demand ...

That is from the *Hansard* of 21 June 2001. Then we got a little bit confused, because in the *Gold Coast Sun* in October 2007 she said that apparently—

There is no demand for a new High School and there is no point in lobbying for something that you don't need, statistics show otherwise.

And then again in the *Gold Coast Sun* dated 11 March 2009 she said—

The latest figures do not indicate a need for a new school for another 20 years and to build one for vanity's sake would strip nearby schools of resources. The minute I see there is a need for one I will be the first person to lobby for it.

Robina State High School is operating at 80 per cent capacity and can only accept approximately 400 more enrolments before reaching that capacity. There are eight state primary schools in the district with a total current enrolment of 4,331. I ask this: which high school are these children expected to attend? I call on the Bligh Labor government to commit to a feasibility study for a new high school west of the M1 in the Mudgeeraba electorate and to provide the documentation which justifies that planning new facilities in a growth corridor such as Mudgeeraba is not required.

Sadly, this brings me to the most neglected part of my electorate and the political football this government has made of this much awaited, much longed for piece of infrastructure. I am well known on the Gold Coast as a fierce campaigner for the upgrade of the M1 and its relevant interchanges because this is the single biggest complaint I have heard in the electorate of Mudgeeraba and indeed much of the Gold Coast. This Labor government has played politics with the M1 for far too long. In 2007 I stood on the Gooding Drive roundabout at exit 77 along with my federal colleagues Steven Ciobo and Margaret May when the federal Minister for Transport, Mark Vaile, announced \$455 million of federal funding for the eight-lane upgrade of the M1 from Nerang to Tugun. For years this state government bleated that it could not even start an interchange until it got matching federal funding. To hear the former member state that the Rudd federal government was honouring this election commitment is a fallacy. Those of us who actually lobbied in Canberra for this funding know that it was already allocated in the AusLink mark II funding and that it was not an election promise but a budgeted promise. Even then, we had to wait until 2008 before the upgrade of that much awaited Nielsens Road interchange began, albeit seven years too late and with a budget blow-out of \$7 million. Locals know why this interchange commenced. They know who stood on the roundabout and on the traffic median at Alexander Drive for a year and—surprise, surprise—they were not wearing a red T-shirt; they were wearing a blue one.

Before the last two elections locals and I watched bemused when yet another house which had been resumed was knocked down so it looked again like something was happening. Interestingly, before the election was called earlier this year, as the former chairman of the Mudgeeraba Action Group I received a Q150 letter asking for my input on what the new Nerang South interchange bridge should be called. I think the bridge should be called the Capon Bridge for Amanda and Brendan Capon, because only after intense lobbying on their behalf was their family home resumed at market value rather than the \$90,000 less that this government was prepared to pay them. We have seen the same \$455 million rehashed, rebadged, reinvented and we still have not seen the M1 upgraded! Residents are sick and tired of a government that keeps bleating about spend, spend, spend on infrastructure whilst I have been lobbying on the side of the road since 2005 for change to this traffic gridlock. It is only now, eight years down the track, we are finally seeing the Mudgeeraba interchange commence, with a further promise to upgrade the M1 from Nielsens Road to Gooding Drive. At least the businesses at City Links Estate are safe in the knowledge that at this rate, the way this government builds, the six-laning will not happen until 2013 and the Elysium Road overpass is safe for a long time to come.

Reedy Creek residents will also have to endure five sets of traffic lights to get onto and off the M1 from their homes and the only reason that anything is happening west of the M1 is because of the Varsity train station east of the M1. I want to remind those opposite that Reedy Creek is actually west of the M1 and the Varsity Lakes station was, until only recently, called the Reedy Creek Railway Station, and of course it goes hand in hand with the Reedy Creek Police Station, which is actually—surprise, surprise—in the Burleigh electorate. As I stand here today to plead yet again for the urgent upgrade of the M1, it saddens me that my own friend is grieving the loss of her only daughter just last weekend on this treacherous stretch of road. My friend stood next to me during many a protest over the lack of funding for the M1. She has spoken out on this issue as a member of the Mudgeeraba Police Consultative Committee and as a local Neighbourhood Watch coordinator, and together we have fought for funding.

It breaks my heart that today, as a member of this parliament, I am still pleading with this government to make sure that other mothers such as my friend Wendy never have to go through this heartbreak themselves. Each time an accident is reported on the M1, every Gold Coaster knows to expect a fatality. When you drive on the M1 and all of sudden you are at a snail's pace, you know with a sickening feeling what you will be driving past after you have had to move off to the road shoulder to enable the fire trucks, the ambulances and the police to get through the Mudgeeraba car park. Every one of us knows

what we will see next. It is too common an occurrence. How many more innocent residents of Mudgeeraba and the Gold Coast have to die before this dangerous stretch of road is upgraded and this state Labor government spends the money it keeps reannouncing to fix this road?

The residents of Mudgeeraba have had eight years of being treated like second-class citizens. This budget, yet again, ignores the most pressing needs of residents, such as upgrading the entire M1, not just reannouncing old Howard government monies; safety barriers and sound barriers now, not in another 10 years time; more police and a state high school west of the M1 now.

This government has a track record of failing to plan whilst the LNP and the former coalition has a track record of building for the present. It seems a lifetime ago from this budget, but in reality it was only approximately 12 weeks ago that I recall the words 'Queenslanders, you can count on me' being said on election night. Yet we have seen this week this Labor government treat Queensland residents with utter contempt and display an arrogance that defies belief. Queenslanders have a right to feel angry and let down. How can the government expect them to count on the government and trust it to have their best interests at the core of its decisions when it is prepared to kick them when they are down?

This budget shows clearly why Queenslanders went to an early election. The government's desperate need for an unnecessary fire sale of profitable public assets to try to fill a budget black hole was not something it wanted the voters to know. The only winners from this fire sale will be the bargain hunters. Fiscal responsibility lesson 101 is that you do not sell assets during a financial crisis or depression. To do so will not result in the best possible price or maximum financial gain.

In effect, the government is short-changing Queensland residents by this sale in the present financial climate. The government's deceit has cost this great state a burden of debt. But unfortunately, it is not a burden that the government alone has to carry. The government has extended this burden to every single Queensland mother, father and child.