



Speech by

## Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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**

**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (8.08 pm): In rising to support the various budget bills before the House, I would like to congratulate the Treasurer on this week's state budget. Tuesday's effort was, as the Premier so succinctly put it, a tough times budget delivered by a tough times Treasurer.

The worst global recession since at least the Second World War may have left a \$15 billion hole in Queensland's finances, but the budget delivered by the Treasurer secures Queensland's future by putting in place a clear strategy to restore our finances while at the same time creating jobs and maintaining the services needed for a rapidly growing population.

In 1931 and facing an enormous crisis of financial confidence, the then federal Treasurer, Ted Theodore—a great Queenslander—understood the urgent need to build infrastructure and keep people in jobs. With more than 300,000 Australians out of work, he petitioned for £18 million to act as an economic stimulus. In his speech to the House of Representatives on 17 March 1931, Theodore said—

There is a vast amount of work awaiting to be done in Australia—work which is necessary for the proper development of the country and would, if completed, be reproductive.

Just like Theodore, the Bligh government understands that during this latest financial crisis there is also work to be done. That is why we are spending \$18.2 billion on infrastructure projects. We have kept building to keep Queensland growing and to create jobs. Our commitment to the building programs and the jobs will allow us to emerge from the global recession stronger, not weaker. In these tough times, we need to take extraordinary action, we need to make the tough decisions and we need to continue investing in the future of Queensland. As I say, the government's \$18.2 billion investment in infrastructure supporting some 127,000 jobs is a testament to that. In these tough times, the Bligh government is not afraid to make those tough decisions—tough decisions like axing the fuel subsidy. It was a tough decision, but it was the right decision. Deciding to sell government assets for some was a tough decision, but once again it was the right one to make.

I agreed with the Premier's analogy and the analogy that others in the chamber have made when it comes to comparing our state's debt to a mortgage. We hear lots of analogies comparing the state's finances to our domestic financial arrangements, but a mortgage is an example of good debt to have because it is creating an asset for the future. But I would like to extend that analogy a bit further. The assets that the government is seeking to sell through the bills before the House are mature assets. I liken them to adult children who are still at home but are more than ready to leave the nest—children who, the way our finances are arranged in the state of Queensland, are taking their loans through mum and dad's bank. I think it is time and only right and proper that we see these assets move off the state's books to

allow the state to continue to invest in sunrise assets and future assets for the state's economic development.

We see record investment and sustainable development in the resource-rich Surat and Galilee basins, which will be the focal point for the state government over the next year. We are rolling up our sleeves to create 100,000 new jobs over the next three years, and a significant number of them will be made with the outstanding prospect to create jobs in a liquified natural gas export industry. The budget delivers some \$15 million to acquire and safeguard land for a 70-kilometre long corridor between Callide and Gladstone for the LNG industry pipelines. This industry is critical to Queensland's long-term future. The Coordinator-General and a specialised LNG industry unit located in the Department of Infrastructure and Planning are focused on building this new industry for Queensland because it means jobs.

Tough times are the best times to build infrastructure because, as I have said, it creates jobs when they are needed most and puts bread on the table of Queensland families. That is why significant investment is being channelled into water, road and other job-generating capital projects. By way of example, construction of the water grid is continuing with \$211.5 million for construction of the northern pipeline interconnector stage 2. The pipeline will be approximately 48 kilometres long and extend from Eudlo to Cooroy on the Sunshine Coast. This project will deliver up to 330 jobs and is due to be completed in 2012. Some of those opposite, like the member for Gympie, would like to see that project scrapped. I heard him say that in the debate earlier. This is just another example of the opposition's short-sightedness. The northern pipeline interconnector stage 2 is a vital piece of water infrastructure that will safeguard the Sunshine Coast from drought.

But the opposition does not think that the people of the Sunshine Coast deserve that security. It would also like to see the Traveston Crossing Dam scrapped, but the Bligh government remains committed to this vital piece of infrastructure. The opposition wants to scrap projects like Traveston and the northern pipeline interconnector stage 2 because it does not have the courage to make the tough decisions, but the Bligh government does. We have shown in this latest budget that we have what it takes to make those tough decisions in these tough times and we understand that Queenslanders need water security.

Infrastructure projects are indeed the powerhouse which keeps Queensland going through these tough economic times, generating jobs and boosting our economy. The House has heard me—maybe ad nauseum—on the Airport Link, northern busway and airport roundabout upgrade projects—

**Mr Finn:** Too right!

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I take that interjection from the honourable member for Yeerongpilly. I talk about these projects because they are great examples of the building program of this state. They are great examples of infrastructure which will make long-term improvements to the lifestyle of north siders while generating jobs. Other highlights for my constituents in the Stafford electorate are job-creating projects such as the \$69 million state-of-the-art Queensland Emergency Operations Centre at Kedron Park, the \$21.28 million investment to completing—

**Mr Nicholls:** That's in my electorate!

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** That is in your electorate, but it will certainly provide job opportunities for people across the north side.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members will speak through the chair.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The \$21 million investment in completing and constructing 102 homes in the Stafford electorate is also a very welcome budget measure on behalf of those people who have often been waiting for very long times on housing waiting lists because of a lack of investment by previous governments at a federal level. But it is great to see that huge, as the Treasurer says, Chifley-like investment in public housing that is going to provide opportunities to put a safe and high standard roof over the heads of many people in our community.

Commitments are also made in the budget for the expansion of the Prince Charles Hospital's capacity and towards the provision of the children's emergency department, which was a key plank of the re-election campaign of the Bligh government on the north side. Vital funds have also been set aside for passenger set-down and other transport facilities at a range of schools in the Stafford electorate including Padua College, St Anthony's Kedron, Wilston State School and Somerset Hills State School. The Chermside Ambulance Station will also be upgraded at a total cost of \$1.2 million. I welcome a range of other measures that are contained in the budget, including the increase to the pensioner electricity rebate which will be very welcomed by the older members of the Stafford community and north side community more generally but particularly across the length and breadth of Queensland because the maintenance of the tax competitiveness of the state of Queensland is an important measure that was part of the range of hard, tough choices that needed to be made by this government and have been made.

In contrast, as a keenly interested student in our party systems, I can pinpoint now exactly when the Queensland Liberal Party died. It was not at the time of the merger. That was just the beginning of the

decline; that was when the disease started. The death came with the Leader of the Opposition's reply in this debate yesterday. This debate acts as some sort of last rites. The party of free enterprise has capitulated to the old-style agrarian socialists. Labor has always recognised that there is a role for government in the economy, but its role is not to protect sinecures and special pleadings. In Queensland today, as has always been the case, Labor is the modernising party. It is the progressive party. It is the party that Queensland can trust to have a vision for the future. The Leader of the Opposition has identified Margaret Thatcher, John Howard and Lawrence Springborg as his heroes. I feel pretty confident about where Mrs Thatcher and Mr Howard would have stood in tonight's debate about the role for the government in the economy. I am surprised where the Leader of the Opposition has ended up, but it does reiterate the death of the Liberal Party and the extraordinary ascendancy here in the 21st century of those agrarian socialists who have made up the National Party for so long, and it also reiterates the position of the opposition.

Above all else, in these tough economic times the government remains committed to maintaining the building program. It is extremely important that the program continues not only because of the jobs that it creates directly but also because of the indirect jobs that it creates for the benefit of businesses and communities right across the length and breadth of Queensland. The Renewing Queensland Plan to sell government owned assets and to discontinue the fuel subsidy was made with the two goals of infrastructure and jobs in mind.

The worst global recession in our lifetime means that we must think very carefully about what we spend and what represents the best value for Queensland's taxpayers. We must restore the state's finances to enable, not disable, our future growth. On that note, I commend the bills to the House.