



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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### APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This week's state budget reconfirms two things in the minds of Queenslanders: Labor is not listening and Labor cannot be trusted. After almost 20 uninterrupted years in office, Labor is not listening when it comes to privatisation and is not listening when it comes to the spiralling costs of living. After almost 20 uninterrupted years in office, Labor cannot be trusted when it comes to balancing the books, cannot be trusted with our credit rating, cannot be trusted when it promises no new taxes.

At no stage in the last 20 years has there been a clearer choice for Queenslanders, a more important choice for Queenslanders. It is a choice between the LNP, which has a plan for debt reduction; or Premier Anna Bligh and Labor, who believe in debt accumulation. It is a choice between the LNP, which has a plan to stop privatisation, stop the fire sale of \$15 billion worth of assets; or Premier Bligh and Labor, who will pursue privatisation, pursue the fire sale of \$15 billion worth of assets. Queenslanders have a choice between the LNP, which has a plan for job creation; or Premier Bligh and Labor, who want to tax mining jobs and who want to jeopardise jobs through privatisation, jeopardise jobs at Queensland Rail, at our ports and in our forestry companies and motorways. Queenslanders have a choice between the LNP, which has a plan to reduce the cost of living; or Premier Bligh and Labor, who believe in higher fuel prices, higher electricity prices, higher water charges, higher council rates and Labor's higher road charges.

On the most fundamental of issues on those core economic principles, Queenslanders have even more choices. It is a choice between the LNP, which has a track record of retaining Queensland's always-cherished AAA credit rating; or Premier Bligh and Labor, whose only track record is to lose the AAA credit rating—the only mainland state to have lost it, much to our national and international embarrassment. Queenslanders have a choice between an LNP government prepared to stand up for Queensland and stand up to Canberra; or Premier Bligh and Labor, who will give billions of dollars in royalties to Canberra along with an entire health system. And it is a choice between the LNP, which has a clear plan to enshrine budget honesty and budget transparency; or Premier Bligh and Labor, who believe in fabricating costings, believe in making false election promises, even believe in introducing special laws to this parliament to ensure that the Treasurer and every minister do not have to answer truthfully one single question put to them by the budget estimates committee—the very committee designed to allow scrutiny of every claim made by every minister as a part of the 2010-11 budget.

Two years ago the same Labor Treasurer and the same Labor Premier sat in those same two seats in this same chamber and gave exactly the same commitments that they give now. Two years ago they could manage the debt, they said. They were committed to a AAA credit rating, they said. Everything was fully costed, they said. Nothing would be privatised and no fuel taxes would be introduced, they said. The health crisis could be fixed, they said. Infrastructure was on time and on budget, they said. And our schools as a part of the Smart State were national leaders, they said. But, of course, Queenslanders know that everything that was said was a complete fabrication.

Behind all the grandiose promises, all the grandiose claims, the grandiose projections, this Labor state budget gives the green light to record tax and record debt. Behind all the glossy brochures, behind all the tarted up graphs and charts, this state budget gives the green light to record hospital waiting lists and record traffic congestion. Behind all the audacious backslapping, behind the carefully rehearsed one-liners from the Treasurer, this state budget gives the green light to the mass fire sale, the privatisation of \$15 billion in assets—assets owned by Queenslanders, the same Queenslanders who were never once asked if they approved of Labor's fire sale.

Behind the rhetoric, behind the glib dismissal of scrutiny, this state budget gives the green light to job losses, not job creation. It gives the green light to Labor's job-destroying tax on mining and it gives the green light to Labor's job-destroying privatisation agenda. Behind the scripted smiles on the faces of Labor MPs, behind the thousands of self-congratulatory media statements, we have a state budget that gives the green light to spiralling costs of living. The cost of fuel is up by 9.1c per litre thanks to Labor's fuel tax. Electricity prices are up by 54 per cent since Labor privatised the retail arms of Energex and Ergon. Water charges, up; car registration, up; motorway tolls, up; and now the simple task of taking rubbish to the dump will also incur a tax, a tax of between \$35 and \$150 per tonne. After more than a decade of mining boom, Labor should have more to show than record debt and record taxes. And there should be money in the bank—money put away in the good times to help out in the bad times. But there is not. Where did all the money go and why were the warnings not heeded? Queensland deserves better. Queenslanders deserve better.

In the past, state budgets and state elections have been about a competition of ideas to improve Queensland. Today they are a competition of ideas on how to fix Queensland. That is how much the landscape has changed during the almost 20 uninterrupted years of Labor governments in this state. This year's state budget is defined by record debt—a debt that has climbed from \$20 billion in 1999 to a debt of \$51 billion this year, a debt that will grow to \$83.5 billion in 2014-15. This year's state budget is defined by deficit—the only mainland state with a deficit budget, an inability by Labor to spend within its means. Labor's failure to spend within its means will ensure a \$300 million deficit—a \$300 million deficit this year alone, and Labor plans to operate with a budget deficit all the way from now until 2015-16. That means in total between now and 2014 deficits will total \$6.5 billion.

This year's state budget is defined by spiralling costs of living—increases in fuel, electricity, water, registrations and road charges. This year's state budget is defined by yet more dishonest projections—dishonest projections because it deliberately and calculatedly does not factor in the job impact and revenue impact of Kevin Rudd and Labor's super tax on mining. This year's state budget is defined by a job-destroying failure to deliver on capital works. We were told that the centrepiece of the 2009-10 budget was an \$18.2 billion Capital Works Program—a program the government said was critical to creating jobs. We now know that was never delivered on. We now know that the government underspent its Capital Works Program by \$880 million. That means 6,725 new jobs went astray. They were lost.

In the forward estimates Labor has cut \$22.3 billion of capital investment. That is the schools, roads and hospitals for Queensland's future that will not be built because Labor has cut them from the budget. It also means that the federal government's stimulus package was used as an excuse by the state government to cut its commitments. This year's state budget is also defined by a government that refuses to listen to the public, that refuses to put a halt to its dangerous economic philosophy of selling off \$15 billion worth of assets.

This year's state budget is defined by record hospital waiting lists. The government's answer to record waiting lists is to reduce the number of beds per person. In 2008-09 there were 2.34 beds per 1,000 Queenslanders. That ratio will now get steadily worse and fall to 2.3 beds—no improvement. It is the same for the ratios of police to population, of firefighters to population, of emergency services officers to population. This year's state budget is defined by a blow-out in public housing waiting times, hurting battlers. It had been estimated that 21,000 people would be on the long-term social housing register, but it is now 28,000.

This year's state budget is defined not by a Smart State agenda but by a dumbed-down agenda when it comes to numeracy and literacy in our schools and when it comes to classroom behaviour standards. At primary school, the percentage of parents satisfied with their child's school has again fallen. No wonder the government has announced that it will discontinue this measure in the budget papers. It is a similar story for secondary schools, where the percentage of parents satisfied with their child's school has dropped an entire percentage point.

This year's state budget is defined by a record tax take—a tax take at a time when working families are already doing it tough. This government so often likes to dishonestly claim that a lack of infrastructure is all the fault of massive population growth—population growth that the government struggles to keep up with. It is a dishonest claim, because the government fails to mention that its tax take has grown at four times the rate—yes, four times the rate—of population growth. Between 1999 and 2009, Queensland's

population grew by 26 per cent—from 3.5 million residents to 4.4 million residents. For the same period, state government tax revenue grew by 104 per cent—from \$4.6 billion to \$9.4 billion. There is simply no excuse for a budget deficit.

Sure, there are some welcome announcements in this budget debate—mainly small announcements. But, like all Queenslanders, no-one really knows anymore what we can believe and what we cannot believe from this 20-year-old Labor government. We often speak about a state budget in terms of large dollar figures. We use economic jargon that dehumanises the true impact of budgets and budget implications. So for a moment I want to talk about Labor's mismanagement of the budget from the perspective of an average Queensland worker who woke up this morning in the average family home. If they were keeping a diary for this morning alone, this is how it would read. This is a day in the life of a Queensland under Labor: 'At 6 am, wake up and switch on the light. Power bill up 54 per cent. At 6.10 am, shower. Water charges up 47 per cent. At 7.45 am, get the kids in the car for the school run. Registration up 21 per cent. At 8.05 am, stop at the petrol station to fill up. Labor's new fuel tax means another 9.1c per litre. At 8.10 am, traffic jams everywhere. Take the Gateway to try to save time. Tolls up 33 per cent. At 8.30 am, drop kids off at school. Queensland has one of the worst literacy and numeracy rates and standards in Australia. How did this happen in the so-called Smart State? At 8.45 am, get to work. I work for Queensland Health. Hope I actually get paid today.' That is a snapshot of a day in the life—in fact, a morning in the life—of a Queensland today, a Queensland feeling the impact and paying for the impact of Labor's economic mismanagement, Labor's economic bungling.

For all the promises that fuel taxes and registration increases would lead to more money for better roads, what do we find hidden in the detail of the state budget? We find that road funding is to be cut. In the 2008-09 budget, \$3.83 billion was spent in the capital works budget for Main Roads. In 2009-10, this figure was reduced to \$3.5 billion. In 2010-11—this year's state budget—it is cut again to \$3.3 billion. How does Labor explain that? As motorists pay Labor's fuel tax, Labor spends less on roads.

There is a similar story with our power bills. Who could ever forget Labor's decision to privatise the retail arms of Energex and Ergon? Who could forget the Premier's own words when she gave this commitment—

Most importantly, it does not matter where you live, nobody—not one Queensland—will be worse off under the government's proposal.

Once again, the Premier's words meant nothing. Electricity bills have skyrocketed by 54 per cent since Labor privatised Energex and Ergon. What do Queenslanders get for this massive increase in electricity charges? Under Labor, they get a cut in electricity investment. The capital works papers show that investment in energy generation will be cut by 48 per cent this year—cut in half. So while power bills increase by 50 per cent, Labor will cut investment in energy generation by 50 per cent. Investment in energy generation will be cut from \$710 million to \$367 million. Queenslanders pay more and Labor delivers less.

Everywhere I go people come up to me and say, 'I just want my Queensland back.' That is the Queensland that used to be the economic powerhouse of Australia, the Queensland that was the nation's job-creating engine room. That is the Queensland that could give you a hospital bed—not a chair and not a trolley but a bed and a bed on time. That is the Queensland that did not have a fuel tax, the Queensland that did not have to sell off everything in a panic fire sale. That is the Queensland where a balanced budget was a given, not when a balanced budget was a goal. That is the Queensland where a AAA credit rating was a given, not where a AAA credit rating was a goal.

Queenslanders, financial markets, columnists, rating agencies, analysts and the media do not judge a government on one single budget. Rather, they judge a government on a succession of budgets. They judge a government on its performance over a period of time rather than on a snapshot in time. They are looking for the government's economic DNA. When it comes to Premier Bligh and Labor, that DNA has been identified. It has been found. Debt is in Labor's DNA: \$83.5 billion in debt is being racked up by this Labor government. Already, each and every man, woman and child in Queensland is carrying government debt of \$18,700 each. It is a simple question that should be put to every Queensland: can you afford to put another \$18,700 on your credit card? No. Premier Anna Bligh and Labor have just put it there for them. We have to pay it back. And if it is not us, then our children and grandchildren will have to pay it back.

Labor sent Queensland bust in a boom. Instead of bringing down a budget that reins in debt, Labor brought down a budget that confirms that, during the last year alone, another \$9 billion was added to the state debt. As at 30 June last year, Queensland's debt was \$42 billion. As at 30 June this year, Queensland's debt will be \$51 billion and it is projected to peak at \$83.5 billion. In Queensland there is now more government debt per person than in any other state. To compound the problem, there is still no debt repayment strategy.

One day after the state budget was handed down, the latest business index, the Sensis Business Index for small and medium businesses, was released. It finds that Queensland recorded a strong fall in

business confidence among SMEs, with confidence now just below the national average. It finds that small and medium business support for the Queensland government recorded the largest fall of any state and territory during the past quarter. That means that the impact on Queensland business confidence from Kevin Rudd's mining tax is the same as the impact of the global financial crisis. Queensland's economic recovery starts the day that new sign goes up on our border that says 'Queensland under new management'.

The LNP is determined to restore Queensland as the economic powerhouse of Australia. The LNP gives this commitment: restoring Queensland's AAA credit rating will be the No. 1 priority of an LNP government—the No. 1 priority of Queensland under new management. The LNP also gives this commitment: we will introduce a requirement for an annual state debt repayment strategy to be prepared and updated each year. We will do this by introducing amendments to the Charter of Fiscal Responsibility, which comes under the Financial Administration and Audit Act, to require the government of the day to table a state debt repayment strategy as a stand-alone budget document.

Never before has Queensland experienced the dizzying levels of debt that Labor has allowed to accrue. A state debt repayment strategy is not only important for Queenslanders and for Queensland taxpayers; it is also an essential tool for regaining the confidence of the financial markets and regaining the confidence of the credit rating agencies, the agencies that have been calling out for a clearly defined plan to reduce debt levels so Queensland can regain its once cherished AAA credit rating.

As a part of ensuring taxpayers really do get value for money, as a part of ensuring there are no more special mates deals that escape proper budget scrutiny, we will ensure the most transparent contract system ever. The LNP gives this commitment: to ensure new levels of transparency in government, to ensure taxpayers are getting real value for money, every government contract over \$500,000 will be published and publicly available for scrutiny. This is in sharp contrast to Labor's \$10 million threshold.

The LNP understands that people want government to be more effective in what it does and to do it for less money. That means transforming the way the state goes about its business, using decentralisation, accountability and transparency to reduce dramatically the cost of government. We will bring the operation of government out into the open so that everyone can see whether we are delivering good value for money.

The Bligh Labor government has a terrible record at managing procurement, with hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on mismanaged projects. This mismanagement is exemplified by the CorpTech whole-of-government payroll and HR project. Despite spending over \$400 million between 2004 and 2008, this project was never completed. Government departments relying on the delivery of this project were forced to use stop-gap measures such as the Queensland Health interim payroll solution. This is the solution which, despite being switched on 12 weeks ago, still cannot correctly pay 70,000 Queensland Health workers. Today we heard the Minister for Health confirm that it may take as long as, or longer than, one year to get this right.

The LNP's commitment to publish all government contracts worth over \$500,000 includes a commitment to publish all performance indicators, break clauses and penalty measures. Of course this extra level of budget transparency, this extra level of budget accountability, comes on top of two other policies the LNP has already announced. Already the LNP has announced its plans to rescind Labor's laws that made it legal for ministers to lie to parliament's budget estimates committees. The LNP has already announced—indeed already introduced—a private member's bill to ensure truth in political advertising to make sure that never again will Queenslanders be taken for a ride with the false election promises, false scare campaigns and the false election costings that became the hallmark of Labor's 2009 election campaign.

Incredible as it may seem, the LNP's No. 1 priority of restoring the state's AAA credit rating is not a priority shared by Labor. It is, in fact, one of those core economic principles that divide us, a core economic principle that underlines—doubly underlines—the difference in economic policy and priority, the difference between the LNP and the Labor Party which sent Queensland broke in a boom.

In his first 18 months as Treasurer, the member for Mount Coot-tha lost Queensland's AAA credit rating. On the weekend, he claimed to now have a goal to retrieve it some time in the next four to five years and he would have us believe it was all part of his cunning economic plan to lose it in the first place. He was never given the task of attaining a AAA credit rating; he was given the task simply to retain the AAA credit rating. But the Treasurer failed. He now wants five years to retrieve what he lost in 18 months. Meanwhile, Queenslanders will be asked to pay another \$1.2 billion in interest on our debt all because our credit rating has been downgraded, all because Labor cannot manage the books. If Queensland is ever to regain its credit rating, we must first understand exactly how it came to be lost.

Last year the Premier made much out of her so-called Ministerial Charter of Goals, the goals and priorities she would demand of her cabinet ministers. Amongst the 40 pages of goals and priorities, nowhere was restoring our AAA credit rating mentioned—not anywhere. Restoring our AAA credit rating

was so far removed from the priorities of this Labor government that it did not appear anywhere in 40 pages of goals for the Treasurer and cabinet ministers. When the LNP publicly exposed its absence, suddenly, like an afterthought, the words were added in a column lamely titled 'Other Strategic Priorities'—other.

Queensland did not lose its AAA credit rating because of some global financial downturn. We were the only state to be downgraded. Queensland did not lose its AAA credit rating because of a downturn in the resources sector, otherwise Western Australia would have lost theirs too. No, Queensland lost its AAA credit rating simply because of the economic amateur hour of the government. In the government's Charter of Fiscal Responsibility it says that protecting Queensland's cherished AAA credit rating was, 'an integral part of the government's commitment to the community.' Well, the Treasurer failed to deliver on the most integral part of his charter, just as he failed to deliver on the most integral commitment in the so-called Toward Q2 document, the document the government said was designed to maintain Queensland's AAA credit rating. It is the same Treasurer who ignored the warnings of the credit ratings agencies.

Let us remember what ratings agency Standard & Poor's said on 20 February 2009 when Queensland became the only mainland state to be downgraded—

Queensland's balance sheet is unlikely to remain consistent with a 'AAA' rating. Standard & Poor's has previously indicated that the rating would be under pressure if net financial liabilities as a proportion of operating revenue reach 100-110%.

I want to repeat those words—

Standard & Poor's has previously indicated ...

In other words, Standard & Poor's warned this Labor government and warned this Labor Treasurer. And what did this Labor Treasurer do? Well, he laughed and said that he knew better, just like he laughed yesterday in this chamber making out that he actually had the backing of the credit rating agencies. He does not seem to understand that the credit rating agencies downgraded him—they lost confidence in him.

The credit ratings did to this Treasurer what they never did to Keith De Lacy or David Hamill, what they never did to Joan Sheldon, what they never did to Terry Mackenroth. The credit rating agencies stripped this Treasurer—and therefore Queensland—of its greatest economic asset, its greatest investment lure: its cherished credit rating. Just to ensure there was no doubting the economic buffoonery of this Labor Treasurer, three months later Moody's also downgraded Queensland's credit rating.

Now the government was forced to revert to what it knew best: spin. The credit rating downgrade, Labor claimed, was all the fault of a global financial downturn and other states would soon be stripped of their rating too. More dishonesty—breathtaking dishonesty—so breathtaking, in fact, that Standard & Poor's was forced into releasing a special response on 17 March 2009. In that response they posed this question: why is Queensland the only state whose ratings have been lowered? What was the answer? Standard & Poor's said—

The partial finances released on February 20 2009 suggested that Queensland's debt burden would be significantly in excess of its trigger.

The special statement went on to pose the question: which state might be next to be downgraded? The answer—

The outlook on six of the seven states is stable, which means that we do not expect the ratings on these states to be lowered based on interpretation of current and prospective conditions.

Then, on 20 May, Moody's specifically said in relation to Queensland—

The downgrade reflects the state's deteriorating financial and debt performance and financial flexibility.

Against this backdrop of financial negligence, against this backdrop of financial incompetence, against this backdrop of a rank amateur hour performance by the Premier and the Treasurer, Queenslanders are looking for a government committed to job security and job growth. The LNP is determined to restore Queensland's status as the job-creating engine room of Australia. In 1996-97 when the LNP was in government—then as a coalition government—Queensland was responsible for creating exactly 50.1 per cent of all new jobs in Australia; half of all the new jobs in Australia were being created right here in Queensland.

Last year, the 2009 calendar year, just 13.4 per cent of all new jobs in Australia were being created here in Queensland. And now, at the worst time possible, Kevin Rudd and Labor are threatening to stunt our jobs growth even further. Just as Queensland is looking to and hopeful for a return to the resources boom, Kevin Rudd and Labor have announced they are about to introduce a super tax on mining and mining jobs. Labor is about to tax the very industry we are relying on, particularly in Queensland, to drive jobs growth.

When it comes to job security and job creation, the LNP gives this commitment: in conjunction with Tony Abbott, Warren Truss and the federal Liberal-Nationals, the LNP will stop the super tax on mining and mining jobs. We have to protect Queensland jobs and we have to protect Queensland's share of its mining royalties if our state is ever to regain its once cherished AAA credit rating. In conjunction with a federal Liberal-Nationals government, an LNP state government will stop Labor's super tax on mining, which means we can save jobs, strengthen regional communities and protect mining investments.

Critical to the rebuilding of Queensland's economy is a strong understanding of Queensland. The Premier of this state last campaigned across Queensland hand in hand with Kevin Rudd. Kevin Rudd claimed that the Bligh-Rudd team was critical for Queensland. I challenge the Premier to give a commitment that she will again campaign with Kevin Rudd in the upcoming federal election. I challenge the two of them to walk hand in hand in front of the snapping photographers and TV cameras and again tell Queensland that they are the team for Queensland's future. I challenge them to do this in the mining and regional communities throughout our state. Of course the challenge will not be accepted. Labor's Kevin Rudd, who Queenslanders put so much misplaced confidence in, has sold out the very state that delivered him government. This Labor Premier believes that protecting Kevin Rudd's job is more important than protecting the jobs of Queenslanders. She refuses to decline the federal presidency of the Labor Party. The Premier believes it is more important to be the national president of an organisation committed to job destruction in Queensland than it is to be the Premier committed to job creation in Queensland.

So often, by accident, political leaders throughout the world forget to talk about the heartland voters of their political opponents, but I do not think there is anyone in the LNP who does not feel for the people the Labor Party claims are its heartland. We may have had our differences over the years with some sections of Queensland that Labor claims is its heartland—I acknowledge that. But any differences we may have had have been based on an honest exchange and an honest divergence of views. Today there is no one on this side of the chamber who does not feel for the Queensland Rail worker who may have voted Labor; who does not feel for the forestry worker who may have voted Labor; who does not feel for the nurse, particularly the unpaid nurse, who may have voted Labor; who does not feel for the ETU member, the QPSU member, the AWU member who may have voted Labor. They were conned. They were cheated. They were betrayed by a government and a Premier who concealed the truth, concealed the true policies of Labor, from the ballot box. And of course many were betrayed by their own union bosses who thought that it was more important to protect the job of the Premier than it was to protect the jobs of their own rank and file members.

But the LNP's mission to save jobs and to grow jobs knows no political bounds. The LNP gives this commitment: as a part of the LNP's plan to secure jobs and to preserve our assets for future generations, we will put a halt to Labor's fire sale of \$15 billion in assets. If they are not sold, we will not sell them. If the contracts are not signed, they will not be signed. This is not just a common-sense job security policy but also a common-sense economics policy. We should harness these assets to return a constant income for Queensland. The income from these assets is needed to pay off Labor's \$85 billion of debt. Queenslanders cannot chance these assets and these jobs to a one-off fire sale.

We all know that this debate is more than about privatisation; it is about debt and it is about honesty. The government went to a state election last year promising that its election announcements were properly costed, promising that it could balance the books, promising that privatisation was not on its agenda. We now know that Labor did not cost its policies, we now know that Labor could not balance the books and we now know that privatisation was always on Labor's agenda. We now know why Premier Bligh and Labor rushed to the ballot box six months early. They rushed to the ballot box before the full impact and before the full ramifications of their economic mismanagement would come to light.

If ever there was an argument to privatise these assets—if ever there was—it most certainly does not exist now. The so-called \$15 billion hole Labor talked about is now halved. GST revenue to Queensland surged this year—the 2009-10 year—and the GST revenue will surge again in the coming financial year, and royalties are expected to add another \$1.2 billion to the bottom line, up from \$2 billion to \$3.2 billion in 2010-11. If there never was a case for privatising these assets in the past, then there certainly is not a case for privatising these assets now.

Delivering jobs for Queensland means building Queensland. Last year the state government announced what it said would be an \$18.2 billion Capital Works Program. We now know that program never happened. We now know that it was underspent by more than \$892 million. We now know that that cost us 6,725 new jobs. The LNP is determined to lift Labor's building freeze.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** We are determined to work with the private sector to streamline development approvals, fast-track vital infrastructure and of course give a meaningful commitment to public-private partnerships. The LNP gives this commitment: to help fast-track the rebuilding of Queensland, the LNP will once again make the Coordinator-General, who is supposed to be responsible for streamlining and fast-tracking important infrastructure, answerable to the Premier. Under this government, the Coordinator-General is answerable to a junior minister, ranked 11th in the cabinet line-up, effectively making the position powerless and unable to be of meaningful assistance to investors and builders. Under an LNP government, the Coordinator-General will be directly answerable to the Premier, directly responsible for fast-tracking and streamlining critical infrastructure, job-creating infrastructure.

When it comes to building Queensland, when it comes to delivering services for Queenslanders, we know that small business has a massive role to play. The LNP wants to re-empower small business. The LNP wants to make it easier for small business to retain a steady cash flow, a steady cash flow that allows it to pay bills, employ more people or pay for job-creating services. To help small business dealing with government, the LNP gives this commitment: during the course of its first term in government, the LNP will ensure government departments pay their bills within 30 days, not the current 90 days. Small businesses have to pay their bills on time and rely on the state government to do the same. In this simple way, government can do its bit to help small business, do its bit to help jobs growth in small business. Of course, where it is contractually agreed that payments can be made over a greater period, this policy does not change the terms of those contracts.

The LNP is also committed to jobs in rural and regional Queensland. Creating jobs in agriculture has always been a point of sharp contrast between the LNP and Labor. We know that Labor has embarked on a campaign to close down agricultural colleges—a deliberate plan to deter young people from a career in agriculture, a deliberate plan to reduce access to programs to upskill workers or potential workers in the agricultural industry. We know that Labor has gutted staff and therefore gutted the crucial support services for our agricultural sector.

In 2009-10, the state government had budgeted for 800 full-time staff in agriculture, food, tourism and regional services. Of course, Labor never delivered on the 800 full-time staff. Instead of delivering, Labor cut. It cut the staff down to 716. To compound the problem, Labor now announces that it plans to cut staff again in the 2010-11 state budget to take it down to 708 full-time staff. So that is a cut from 800 staff down to 708 staff who are employed in agriculture, food, tourism and regional development. Again, we find another contrast between the LNP and Labor when it comes to budget priorities, when it comes to economic priorities.

The LNP is committed to protecting prime agricultural land for sustainable food and fibre production for generations to come. The LNP gives this commitment to the protection of prime agricultural land. As a part of the LNP's plan to protect prime agricultural land for sustainable food and fibre production for generations to come, the most productive agricultural lands will be scientifically identified, be off limits to mining and be reserved exclusively for agricultural production.

The role of governments is to identify lands and waters for national parks based on their pristine environmental value, create industrial reserves based on their suitability for industry and create tracts of land for development purposes. Similarly, the LNP believes the most productive agricultural lands should be scientifically identified, be off limits to mining and be reserved exclusively for agricultural production. We will differentiate top-quality agricultural land from other good-quality agricultural land. Such lands will be classed as category 1 (Strategic Cropping).

Just as it is unlawful to consider applications to clear vegetation in areas mapped as remnant vegetation, so, too, should it be unlawful to consider applications for open-cut mines on lands identified as top-quality agricultural lands. Food security, economic security, environmental security, biosecurity and national security are all dependent on Australia protecting prime agricultural land, protecting our ability to produce competitively on the domestic and international markets and protecting our ability to truly deliver a 'Buy Australian' campaign and withstand a flood of inferior imported produce and the associated disease and health risks.

When it comes to food security, the LNP gives this commitment. Food security and Queensland's trade capacity will also be enhanced under an LNP government with the creation of an independent Commission for Future Foods and Fibre. This commission will spearhead development of world-leading agricultural produce that will focus on food security at home and cement an international reputation for clean, green food.

These commitments complement the LNP's Resourcing the Regions policy, which will precisely track the flow of mining royalties to ensure all Queenslanders, no matter where they live, benefit from the wealth generated from the resource sector. We recognise that many areas of Queensland are

experiencing massive growth in population and pressure on existing infrastructure due to the growth of existing and new opportunities from the resource sector.

Despite these growing pains, the growth in the resource sector does not only represent a great opportunity for Queensland but, properly managed, also represents a great opportunity for regional centres and communities across the state. Under Labor, however, the enormous revenue generated from the resource industries in regional Queensland is not being reinvested in our communities. The \$83.5 billion debt, coupled with the loss of Queensland's AAA credit rating, means that more money than ever before is being eaten up in massive interest payments.

The LNP believes that growing our economy is the best way to start paying off the generational debt that Labor has allowed to accrue. We believe that the best way to grow our economy is to ensure our regions share in a meaningful investment into their communities—not just for services and infrastructure but also for long-term investment that ensures our regional communities have the best opportunity to develop economic resilience and adaptability to meet the challenges of the future.

To underpin our Resourcing the Regions platform, the LNP will undertake precise economic modelling, to be published as a part of our first state budget, on the flow of mining royalties to ensure all Queenslanders, no matter where they live, benefit from the wealth generated from the resource sector. That is our commitment to economic transparency. That is our commitment to ensuring that the wealth created today is invested into industries, invested into communities, to diversify so that we can create the wealth of tomorrow.

We all know that thousands upon thousands of jobs in rural, regional and metropolitan Queensland are dependent on the enormous and diverse tourism potential of our state. As the member for Surfers Paradise, I know the importance of this industry only too well. Tourism is doing it tough, but it has been made tougher by the state government's failure to deliver on promises of extra flights, and it has been made tougher by the state government's decision to hit drive tourism with the 9.1c per litre fuel tax. Labor's fuel tax has zapped a major competitive advantage Queensland had over every other state when it came to drive tourism.

It was amazing on Tuesday to listen to the Treasurer outline, in a half-hour speech, what he claimed was an economic vision and an economic plan for Queensland. Yet not once did the Treasurer utter the word 'tourism'. Not once did he acknowledge the existence of this major driver of our economy. Not once did he say what sort of role Labor envisioned for the tourism industry as a part of rebuilding our once proud economy. Now we know why. The answer is contained in book 2 of the Service Delivery Statements. In this booklet, we find Labor's secret plan to gut funding from Tourism Queensland—the state's peak tourism marketing body. In this hour of need for the tourism industry, what has this Labor government gone and done? Labor has made an \$8.8 million cut to the budget of Tourism Queensland—a 14 per cent cut to the budget of Queensland's peak tourism marketing body. In 2009-10, the state government contributed \$63.9 million in funding to Tourism Queensland. That will be cut to \$55.1 million in this year's state budget. This is an inexplicable, shameful and contemptuous cut to one of the state's most prized job-creating industries.

The government's dismissal, its rejection, of regional job-creating opportunities is also mirrored in the Indigenous communities of Queensland. Labor's blind pursuit of wild rivers laws prevents so many of our Indigenous communities in the cape from developing job-creating businesses. These laws would have to be one of the worst social and economic policies ever imposed by a government on our Indigenous communities. The LNP believes fundamentally in this philosophy when it comes to our Indigenous communities in the cape. The LNP believes in turning communities of welfare into communities of achievement and enterprise.

Of course, a large part of our state's natural appeal rests on the protection of its natural environment. When it comes to protecting our environment, we believe that action is more important than words. The LNP gives this commitment: during our first term in government the LNP will consolidate the splintered environmental agencies—the EPA and the offices of clean energy and climate change—into one coordinated body charged with spearheading environmental protection. Protecting our environment starts at home, and that means having the world's most pristine and protected environmental areas, not the world's largest environmental bureaucracies. Where savings are made from reducing overlapping bureaucracy, the funds will be used to directly employ additional on-the-ground staff in areas such as our national parks. In the last 10 years the ratio of rangers in our parks has actually worsened, rising from one ranger for every 11,283 hectares of park land to one ranger for every 15,489 hectares of park land.

During the rest of this week's sitting, the LNP shadow ministers will speak in greater detail about the individual portfolios for which they are responsible, the individual portfolios that have been so mismanaged by an almost-20-year-old Labor government which is out of ideas, out of energy and out of credibility. They will talk about the four themes that define this government and this budget: debt, mismanagement, dishonesty and the spiralling cost of living.



It is on that last issue that I want to close today. The LNP has seen the bitter disappointment that Queenslanders have felt towards this government. We have seen and felt the hurt and despair of Queenslanders who are paying out of their own pockets for the personal incompetence of the Labor Premier and the Labor Treasurer. We have seen the horror on the faces of Queenslanders as Labor MPs, the Labor Premier and the Labor Treasurer all had the audacity to congratulate themselves, all had the audacity to high-five each other, as fuel taxes went up, electricity went up, water went up, car registration went up—all because an uncontrolled Labor debt also went up. The LNP is committed to reducing the costs of living.

The LNP makes this commitment to Queensland motorists: the LNP will freeze for its entire first term in office registration fees for cars and light vehicles along with recreational boats, trailers and horse floats. To help seniors and pensioners with the costs of living, the LNP makes this commitment: an LNP government will increase the electricity rebate by 30 per cent for seniors and concession card holders. This will take the rebate from \$190 per year to \$247.

Queenslanders are being personally penalised, personally taxed by Premier Bligh and Labor simply to pay for the economic mismanagement that Premier Bligh and Labor have personally presided over. These announcements are the first stage of the LNP's policy agenda to ensure the Queensland economy once again becomes the economic powerhouse of Australia. This is the first stage of the LNP's policy agenda to help lower the cost of living, to restore confidence in this state, to give our state back the quality of services and to do it with honesty and integrity.