



Speech by

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.09 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak about Estimates Committee A. I note the comments of the chairman. I was the deputy chairman of that committee. In his speech just concluded the chairman made reference to the issues of shadow ministers and members of the committee asking questions not to do with the appropriations. I note the standing orders relating to estimates committees that are part of this parliament. There is no rule that questions have to be directed to the Service Delivery Statements. Discussions may be wide-ranging on a number of policy issues. If the government wants to change the rules, it can change the rules. Because it has the numbers it can do whatever it likes. We were very clearly following the standing orders that say that, if there are certain matters that can be prosecuted, those questions should be wide-ranging and there can be wide-ranging policy discussions. It does not say that every question has to have a specific reference to the SDS. It is up to the chairman to do that.

It is interesting that the Premier did not even know how many books there were in the budget papers. When I made reference to book 5, the Premier made out in her typical way that there were not five books. But she then had to acknowledge that there was such a book, that there was a book 5. So that was typical of the Premier, who was not even aware of the fact that there are five books in the budget process.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: Now that they have woken up we can talk about the structure of the budget papers. They do not contain sufficient detailed information to provide for proper scrutiny of activities. We do not have enough opportunities for hearings by estimates committees when considering particular portfolios or for more hearings throughout the year. We understand, too, that there are issues about ministers and their knowledge of portfolios and whether they allow public servants and statutory officials who exercise direct responsibility for the conduct of activities to directly answer questions posed by members.

Our domestic economy remains in the doldrums. We got report after report last week, followed up by reports this week, that show the demand for capital investment in the private sector. One day the Treasurer says that the banks are not lending enough. Well, that may be because Queenslanders are under pressure from all the costs that have gone up in the last year and a half—whether it is electricity, water or tolls. In terms of selling our assets, the Treasurer and the Premier are giving different reasons for that. Last year it was to fill the budget black hole; this year it is to get back the AAA credit rating. Queenslanders are tired of this.

When we look at the budget from 1998, which was a \$14 billion budget under the last years of the Borbidge-Sheldon government, we see that it was a budget of a government that had money in the bank, no deficit and no fuel tax. Fast-forward to 2010 and we have \$40 billion in income and \$42½ billion of expenditure, and of course we have a new waste tax and an \$85 billion debt going forward. We have a budget that is likely to stay in deficit for another five or six years. This budget clearly has a structural deficit.

It is obvious that revenues are clearly not keeping up with expenses, and that is something this government refuses to do anything about.

I prosecuted a number of issues including ministerial accountability, the perceptions of corruption and cronyism in the government, and the appointment of the Police Commissioner. That was interesting. We had the Premier having to read a letter from the CMC chairman, who confirmed that best practice would be to advertise the position. But, in the course of her answer, the Premier said that the Fitzgerald inquiry recommendations should be read with a heavy dose of common sense. Wasn't that great coming from a Premier who likes to say that they are open and accountable but that the Fitzgerald inquiry should be read with a dose of common sense and interpretation! Of course we know that the chairman of the CMC says that we do not know if we have the best Police Commissioner, because the government has not followed best practice, as recommended by him, in advertising for the position.

The ministerial charter of goals did not even have the restoration of the AAA credit rating as one of its main planks and it had to be inserted subsequently. Today's charter of goals for the health minister confirms more privatisations, including nursing homes owned by Queensland Health. So very clearly it says one thing before an election and will do anything after. I am very concerned that on issues such as its plans to recover the AAA credit rating very obviously the Premier is unable to explain when exactly that will happen. We have four or five different options for that from 2011 through to 2015. We know that in the past there have been lots of questions that the Premier has been unable to answer about the cost of the assets sale process and about the cost of living that is crippling Queenslanders.

(Time expired)