




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER LEVY REPEAL AND REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (9.16 pm): It is my pleasure to rise and speak in the cognate debate on these bills, including the Appropriation Bill. Budgets define governments—that is what the Premier said this week—and I will tell the House how Labor will always be defined: by waste, debt, deficit, taxes and empty promises. Let me tell the House how this Bligh Labor government will be defined by the budget handed down this week by the honourable member for Mount Coot-tha, the Treasurer.

Honourable members may recall last month that American evangelist Harold Camping—who has predicted the end of the world not once but twice—was so confident of his prediction of the coming rapture, the supposed end of the world, that he even nominated a date, and as we all know his predictions proved well short of the mark. The member for Mount Coot-tha is Queensland's political equivalent of Harold Camping—an economic evangelist, a cult leader whose soaring rhetoric continually predicts growth and better times but whose predictions continually fall well short of the mark. The Treasurer's mantra to the people of Queensland is 'Do without now and the good times will inevitably follow'—the classic mark of the cargo cult or, in this case, the ALP government.

According to the Treasurer's economic rapture, Queensland's economic growth in 2009-10 was predicted to be three per cent. The cold reality was 2.1 per cent. In 2010-11, the Treasurer—channeling Harold Camping—predicted 3¾ per cent growth. What was the cold reality? Zero per cent. This is the worst recorded level in 30 years. Undeterred, just like Harold Camping, this year the Treasurer has now upped the ante and predicted five per cent. It is like waking up on a Sunday morning and watching that channel, isn't it?

Queensland's economy was already struggling before it was delivered a king-hit by floods and cyclones. State final demand figures for Queensland showed only 1.2 per cent growth for the year ended 31 March, with a contraction of 0.6 per cent in the March quarter. It was patently obvious that we were never going to achieve the Treasurer's prediction of 3¾ per cent for the 2010-11 budget—it will now end up at zero per cent. Transfer duty transaction numbers were already in decline in the December quarter year on year for all regions, as I pointed out in a speech I made in the Mackay parliamentary sittings—thanks to the honourable shadow Treasurer's weekly economic report which I consume with interest, and I will refer to it a little later in my speech.

As I listened to the Treasurer's budget speech, it was once again brought home to me just how out of touch he is with reality. This Treasurer has been pulling Queensland's economic levers for four years, for four budgets. Under his economic vision, his economic leadership, his economic incompetence, business related bankruptcies in Queensland under the Bankruptcy Act in the March quarter represented more than a third of the total throughout Australia—one-third, or 364 out of the national total of 1,080. That is more than in New South Wales and more than Victoria, both of which have just removed economically inept

Labor governments. What does the Treasurer have to say about economic conditions on the Gold Coast? He shrugs them off by saying—

The Gold Coast is having an economic hangover because the party there was bigger to start with.

There is no mention of the various evolutions of the Integrated Planning Act and the Sustainable Planning Act that have made life so uncertain for businesses, developers and even the council to plan for some certainty for the future. Labor's failed economic management has forced more than 4,000 workers and their families to leave the Gold Coast, and everywhere one looks there are empty businesses and 'for sale' or 'for lease' signs on business premises, on houses and on units.

Dr Douglas interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I hear the member for Gaven echoing those sentiments. Whether it is the urbanised area of the Gold Coast or the areas that are slightly more regional on the Gold Coast, that is the story throughout the Gold Coast. Retail trade is in the doldrums—the inevitable result of this Labor government's policies that have emptied people's pockets by ratcheting up the prices of water, electricity, rates, car registration, licences and petrol.

Thanks to this Labor government's economic incompetence, Queensland is nearly now at the point of having reverse migration—fewer people arriving from the southern states than are leaving. ABS statistics showed a 40 per cent fall in interstate migration to Queensland in the September quarter last year, notwithstanding the Treasurer's prediction, as we saw in the budget on Tuesday, that they will soon suddenly return. This Labor government's policies have nullified many of the advantages which made Queensland the preferred place to live for many Australians. At the moment we have to rely on overseas migration and births exceeding deaths to boost our population.

But what opportunities are there for Queenslanders under this Bligh Labor government and who believes its predictions? This week, having heard the prediction of 140,000 jobs promised in the budget, Griffith University economist Professor Makin has questioned that particular promise. We all remember the 100,000 bread-winning jobs promised by the Premier and her Treasurer at the last election. What happened to them? We all know it turned out that that forecast included jobs that offered as little as one hour employment a week. That is hardly crumb-winning let alone bread-winning! The slowdown in interstate migration will last as long as people have diminished confidence in Queensland's economic performance. That confidence does not come back overnight. It will need a change of government to rebuild consumer and workplace confidence, and that could take from three to four years according to some demographers.

The people of the Gold Coast do not need the Treasurer's gratuitous advice that we should become a fly-in fly-out centre for the mining boom or that we should sell ourselves better and what we have to offer on the Gold Coast, or that we should get rid of the Gold Coast City Council as an answer to the woes besetting the Gold Coast. The people of the Gold Coast do not want this Labor government to turn its back on them as it has done with no cabinet minister from the Gold Coast. Even the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 20 April described Treasurer Fraser as 'all talk and limited action'. The people of the Gold Coast want action—not words, which is all they get from this tired Labor government.

We do not want our seriously ill patients turned away from the Gold Coast Hospital, as 300 have been told over the past 12 months, and told to go somewhere else because hospital waiting lists are too long. Our building and construction industry needs help, not more taxes. This year from January to April there were a total of 253 residential and building projects started on the Gold Coast. Compare that with 1,714 the year before and 2,290 in 2008. In fact, in April there were 15 projects started in residential and commercial building projects. My point is that the government is responsible for setting the conditions in our economy that lead to a reflection in business having the confidence to know that they are going to sell their projects and be able to develop them. But under this Labor government we had all of those charges—the raft of charges that have increased—that have diminished business confidence so much that we can see our business and construction industry absolutely decimated.

It is proof when we look at the economic figures that are provided by the library every week. Building approvals nationally declined by 14.1 per cent over the 12 months to March 2011, but for the same period in Queensland under this Labor government the decline was a staggering 38.1 per cent. Housing finance nationally over the year to March 2011 declined by 1.8 per cent. In the same period Queensland recorded a 17.5 per cent decline in the trend value of housing finance commitments. I ask: what was Treasurer Andrew Fraser's solution to this decline? He increased stamp duty by 125 per cent on an average priced family home, which will be a real help to the building industry. It is the equivalent of a \$7,000 tax on average homes that people are going to have to pay—another tax by stealth as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer. Along the way he demeaned car salesmen and real estate salesmen. He was not quite as dismissive at the REIQ dinner last year.

To back up his rapturous predictions on economic growth, in the budget papers the Treasurer has produced a pretty graph. I note that the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution yesterday pointed out some of these graphs and pictures in the budget papers that honestly defy belief and which try to

demonstrate that this budget position is better than it was going to be or is going to be better in the future because of the predictions of the Treasurer. This pretty graph shows Queensland as the No. 1 state for predicted economic growth—predicted growth, not actual growth. This budget, the Treasurer assured us, 'puts us right back where we belong out in front'. This is classic evangelism—classic Harold Camping-ism: ignore all your failed previous predictions and just make a new one. Never mind that people who really know what they are talking about when it comes to economic assessments and predictions, such as leading economists in the major banks, have all placed Queensland's economic performance in last place, at the bottom, behind all of the other states.

It saddens and disappoints me to listen to the Treasurer boast about Queensland being a magic place—a place of optimism and opportunity—as though only Labor can provide that optimism and opportunity. It saddens and disappoints me when the stark reality is very different, particularly for the tens of thousands of Queenslanders whose concerns the Treasurer dismisses. It saddens and disappoints me for the thousands of Queenslanders who have to fill out business activity statements in a few weeks, at the end of the financial year, and whose economic hardship has been created by him and the government led by the Premier, the member for South Brisbane. It also saddens and disappoints me for the thousands of Queenslanders, many on fixed incomes—pensioners, concession card holders, part-time assistant electorate officers—who are suffering through rising costs of necessities like water, electricity, rates, grocery prices, car registration, increased fuel costs and licences, who have been ignored and abandoned by this Treasurer, who gives with one hand and takes away with the other. It is always more take than give.

As shadow minister for police, corrective services and emergency services and a resident of the Gold Coast, I want to take a moment to honour the late Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding, who tragically lost his life on 1 June. I know that other members have acknowledged it this week; it is my first opportunity to do so. He was grievously injured while serving the people of Queensland whilst responding to a 000 call the previous Sunday evening. I want to pay my deepest respects to his wife, Sonya, and their children, Hudson and Grace. I understand that the fund set up by the Police Union has raised in excess of \$540,000, and I urge all Queenslanders to keep his family in their thoughts long into the future, and this applies especially once the media focus has passed. It will be a very difficult time for the family. I know that the Police Service is determined to support Sonya and the family. Along with other members, I also was privileged to attend the public memorial service for Damian Leeding which was a remarkable statement of support—unprecedented on the Gold Coast and perhaps even in the whole state—by the community for all of the dedicated members of the Queensland Police Service. We owe them all a very deep gratitude. It also showed the remarkable determination of the community to claim back their city from the criminals who are plaguing it in different areas.

In terms of my shadow responsibilities for police, as other members have mentioned, the Queensland Police Union has described this as the worst budget for police resourcing for 20 years. It simply proves that this Bligh Labor government is not serious about tackling crime and is not serious about preventing crime. It is not serious about solving crime and it is definitely not serious about dealing with offenders.

The minister talks about a reduction in crime rates and all of us hear that every morning in question time. Queenslanders do not believe him. The minister does not talk about the number of crimes committed, which are increasing, or those who will not report crimes. Because clean-up rates are so low, people figure that they might as well not bother. Queenslanders' perception is that we are not safer. This year, over 80 violent robberies on the Gold Coast and in Coomera have left Gold Coasters and Queenslanders fearful and it has cost a policeman his life.

What does it take to make this Labor government wake up and act? It takes the LNP, a spate of armed robberies and a wave of community anger. Campbell Newman announced that the LNP would establish a serious crime task force—a proposal the Bligh Labor government rejected out of hand. It took this wave of community anger following the tragic events for the minister and the Premier to scurry to set up Task Force Resolve, just as the LNP had said previously it would do. The LNP is listening to the people of Queensland. The ALP is governing for itself.

The LNP also proposed GPS tracking to monitor serious child sex offenders and paedophiles. Labor dismissed the idea out of hand. They said that it was unaffordable and impractical. So they ruled it out. It took pressure from the LNP, the community and the media to force the Labor government to change its mind and it followed, rather than led, and announced that serious sex offenders would be monitored. This desperate Premier could not wait for the budget; she had to announce the GPS tracking for serious child sex offenders to get the negative comments out of the media and off the front page of the *Courier-Mail*. Once again, this tired Labor government is not governing for the people of Queensland, just governing for itself.

In Corrective Services, in 12 months under this government the cost of running Queensland's prison system has blown out by \$66 million. The cause of this blow-out is certainly not an increase in prisoner numbers under this government's weak sentencing laws. It certainly has not blown out due to more staff, because Labor has cut front-line custodial staff by 38. It is another example of this tired Labor

government's inefficient management of Queensland's resources and its preference for bloated bureaucracies as well as being out of touch with underresourced front-line staff.

At a time when violent crime is also on the rise, the Bligh Labor government has also reneged on its promise of 200 additional police per year. It has cut back the numbers to just 150. The excuse the government has offered for this cut is apparently it recruited 'too many new police last year.' Not one person I have listened to believes that we had too many police last financial year. Even Peter Beattie managed to induct 300 police per year. I remind members that this recruitment is for a workforce that is getting now to 10,600. One-hundred and fifty recruits will really not keep up with the losses that we experience from the Police Service. But despite all the rapturous promises of this Labor government, following on from Peter Beattie who inducted 300 recruits a year, it has managed to halve that number. When it comes to police numbers, Queensland has been short-changed by Labor. Once again, with this long-term Labor government reality fails to match the rhetoric. To reduce police numbers by 25 per cent is nothing short of disgraceful. It is a political betrayal of our already underresourced, hardworking, loyal, front-line police.

It is interesting to note that not one police station upgrade or refurbishment scheduled in this budget is to occur in an LNP electorate. On the Gold Coast, the Bligh government has committed to a much needed police beat at Burleigh Heads. In an unsurprising sleight of hand, the government has simply robbed the Burleigh Heads CIB refurbishment project of the \$2 million committed that was in last year's budget and changed it to \$500,000. Carina gets \$2.6 million for a demountable police station to service a community of thousands, whilst Lockhart River in Far North Queensland gets \$9 million for a complex to serve far fewer people than that. I have no argument that Lockhart River needs appropriate police facilities and that it is expensive to build in areas like Lockhart River. But when a remote location gets 3½ times the allocation and we have already ascertained that the Carina Police Station is going to be a demountable, replacing two other police stations on the east side of Brisbane, there are questions that need to be asked.

The Queensland Ambulance Service has also been poorly served by this budget. The spending on the Queensland Ambulance Service has blown out by nearly eight per cent, yet it delivers only an additional 53 staff. Of course, we have canvassed many times that, whilst the ambulance levy is going, that is also a cost that should never have been put on people in the first place. Now, it is going to be replaced with those extra charges—up to \$900 that families are paying in all the other costs that they are wearing, including in electricity and water. There is nothing in this budget for overstretched front-line ambulance officers who are forced to ramp ambulances for hours at hospitals. People must be left wondering and scratching their heads where all the money has gone after nine years of paying Labor's ambulance tax. People might also be forgiven for thinking that electricity bills will now go down now that the ambulance tax is no longer going to appear. But we all know that that is not going to happen.

The Bligh Labor government's budget is big on spending for little result. It shows all the sociopathic hallmarks of an insular, rigid, disconnected, pretentious, domineering, presumptuous, hateful and aggressive Labor government. I contrast that description with the open-minded flexible, caring, compassionate, patient and authentic alternative, a Campbell Newman LNP government. Queensland is fed up with the deceit of a tired Labor government that is addicted to debt and deficit, waste and more taxes. The Treasurer, who is big on rhetoric, confidently announced that the Queensland budget is marching on to surplus—not once, but twice—among the soaring rapture of his budget rhetoric. Let us look at the facts: this year's deficit is \$2.13 billion. Next year—2011-12—there is a \$4 billion deficit. Then there is a \$1.3 billion deficit, an \$873 million deficit and a \$529 million deficit in 2014-15. There is nothing about marching to surplus there. It is deficit after deficit. We cannot believe a word the Treasurer says, except that his predictions are predictably incorrect and that he will invariably blame someone else for his incompetence.

The Treasurer, Labor and the Premier have no debt repayment strategy, a fire sale of assets, which cannot keep up with the interest payments on the debt it has accumulated, and a reliance on Queensland's revenue getting up to \$80 billion, which could take a generation—and that is presuming debt does not increase even more—to try to get back Queensland's AAA credit rating. As Queensland enters its 153rd year, we deserve better. This century is ours for the taking, but it is not going to happen while this tired Labor government remains in power. It is time for us to have a change. There is another way. I exhort Queenslanders to make that choice.

(Time expired)