




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (9.36 pm): It is worthy that I make a brief overview of this embarrassing budget before I discuss the effect that it will have on the residents of the state seat of Coomera. Firstly, despite the asset sales that were so wrong for Queenslanders and Queensland's future, debt is increasing. The maximum projected debt is higher than was originally suggested in 2009-10. The interest on that debt will be \$595,000 per hour, or \$100 million a week. Just imagine what could be bought for that amount every week. This year, the deficit will be \$2.127 billion and it will jump to more than \$4 billion for the year 2011-12. The removal of the ambulance levy of \$113, although welcomed—as I know that this side of the House has opposed this tax for years—will only offset the electricity price rises of around \$120. These increases are on top of a \$700 increase since 2006. This levy and the electricity price rise have a proportionately bigger impact on lower income earners.

The abolition of the principal place of residence concession for homeowners buying established houses and units will severely impact on an already struggling real estate market. As I said, this is an embarrassment for the Treasurer and this tired, old Labor government and it is a disappointment for the people of Queensland in that the budget does not deliver the reform that is needed to help ease cost-of-living pressures. Let us not forget that we are still paying more for fuel, electricity, car registration and water. Electricity prices will continue to increase, car registrations will continue to increase, fuel costs are still rising and other government imposed taxes and charges continue to rise.

I turn now to the specific impact that this disappointing budget will have on the residents of the state seat of Coomera. From Eagleby in the north to Helensvale in the south, this budget will have a severe impact on the residents of my electorate. Of course, the same can be said for many other Gold Coast residents. But it does not help to know that the pain is being shared by many.

In the area of health, I constantly receive complaints from constituents who are suffering severe pain whilst they are stuck on the waiting list. We hear now that many have been knocked back to even get on the waiting list. Granted, the Gold Coast University Hospital at Robina will be coming on line, but my fear is that by the time it does open, waiting lists will have blown out even further and there will be too little, too late, to redress the problem properly.

Labor has failed to properly plan for the future and my residents ultimately pay the price. The \$2.5 million allocated to complete a new temporary ambulance station at Coomera is welcomed. It is one that is desperately needed to fill the void between the Beenleigh station, which is at Eagleby at the extreme north of my electorate, and Helensvale station, which is in the extreme south of my electorate. Those two stations are around 32 kilometres apart, so the Coomera station is a welcome addition. I note that we have a unit based at the QAS training facility at Pimpama as well.

The major issue, though, is the ramping that occurs. I received credible information just the other day to say that a particular ambulance had been ramped at one of the hospitals from 12.30 pm and was

still there, along with 10 others, at 5 pm. How much longer are we going to waste these resources, these highly skilled paramedics? We have to resolve the emergency department crisis in our hospitals.

Looking now at public transport, fares increased 20 per cent last year and will increase 15 per cent this year and 15 per cent each year until 2014-15. These fare hikes are unfair. When you consider that the residents of the Coomera electorate catch trains from the most northerly stations on the Gold Coast line—Helensvale, Coomera, Ormeau and Beenleigh—it is unfair to ask them to pay these price rises without getting commensurate increases in services. What I am talking about is the right to have a seat for the more-than-one-hour ride to the city. That is the service they want—a seat. Many of them do not get one. They are sick of it. Many of them are walking away from the train service and instead commuting by car. This is counter to what we are trying to achieve. This government is seeking to increase public transport use to more than double what it is today on the Gold Coast. I have a tip for the Treasurer and the transport minister: they are not going to achieve this goal by forcing people to stand for an hour each way to and from work on the 'Bombay Express'.

The announcement of a review of timetables for the Gold Coast line is welcome, but unless I have missed it there is no allocation for a review of the bus timetables. That project was shelved more than a year ago because there was not any money. We need a fully reviewed public transport network in the northern Gold Coast region to accommodate the explosion in population that continues to date.

In education we see funding for the ongoing planning of a new Coomera secondary school on land adjacent to the newly opened Gold Coast TAFE campus. This is welcome, as is the allocation of funding to expand Coomera Springs State School and Ormeau Wood State School. It is also worth noting that we have the new Lords School entering the first stages of construction and the new Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School that opened this year. These new schools and the additional funding allocated for kindergartens at Coomera Springs State School, Coomera State School, Eagleby State School and also funding for the kindy at the Lords School are testament to the population growth in the Coomera electorate. Why, then, are we not seeing investment in transport infrastructure commensurate with that growth?

It also puts a question mark over the budgeted staff increase of less than one per cent—just 251 teachers. If the growth in my electorate is being repeated elsewhere, that will not keep up with the pace of ordinary enrolments. I note that there has been a cut to capital works spending. However, the spend is still relatively sizeable, further casting doubt over the prudence of the small increase in teacher numbers.

Turning to main roads, I was hoping to see some allocation of funding for the duplication of the overpass and other works at exit 54 on the M1. Also there is a desperate need for funding to resolve gridlock at exit 38 during peak periods. Sadly these exits were ignored yet again. Indeed, the division 1 councillor, Donna Gates, has been kind enough to help the department out by allocating \$100,000 of her roads budget to a Queensland government owned road to at least try to alleviate a little of the congestion by funding a small slip road. I hope that it works to some degree, but this tired, old Labor government should be ashamed and embarrassed that a council has to allocate scarce dollars, dollars that could have been spent on council controlled roads, because it fails to accept its responsibility on state roads.

I wonder about the accuracy of the budget when I see such blatant errors as in the regional budget statement for the Gold Coast which has included \$159.7 million in funding towards the \$421.6 million upgrade of the Pacific Motorway between Springwood and Daisy Hill. Treasurer, for your information, Springwood and Daisy Hill are many kilometres north of the Logan City-Gold Coast City boundary. Or is this a hint that there are more council amalgamations on the way?

Housing and housing affordability are of great concern to all of us. The new home grant is likely to give a short-term boost to the housing construction industry. The question is: how long will it last? With unemployment and underemployment in the construction industry at astronomical levels on the northern Gold Coast, I worry that it is just not enough, certainly in terms of the length of time it is being made available, to make any lasting difference.

The other concern I have—and I have had discussions with longstanding members of the real estate industry—is: what will the impact of the hike in stamp duty be on people buying property that is not new? The evidence suggests that the majority of sales in my electorate—that is, from Eagleby, which is in the southern part of Logan City on the M1, down to Helensvale—are distressed sales. I need to clarify what I mean by 'distressed sales'. I am not just talking about mortgagee sales; I am also referring to sales brought on by marriage and relationship breakdown. People who are hurting financially due to a downturn in their economic situation often come under stress in their relationship as well. These people are the ones who will be hurt the most by this increase in stamp duty. They can ill afford to discount their property further to take account of the increased burden on the buyer to find the additional stamp duty. The Treasurer is hurting the wrong people. They are already doing it tough and he is putting the boot into them. It could be the nail in the coffin for them.

In turn, the Treasurer is also hurting the real estate industry. Remember, these people are already experiencing the worst period in their memory. This added burden is once again, for many of them, a nail in their coffin. As for mortgagee sales, I am told there are 20,000 call-ups a year for people to show cause to

the bank why they should not have their property sold out from under them. Yet again, this is a nail in their coffin.

Many of the properties on the market today were bought at inflated prices. I am told that prices are down by as much as 30 per cent in my area, not the three per cent or four per cent that is touted as an average. We have a distressed rental market, with many tenants behind in their rent through no fault of their own. This once again puts pressure on landlords who have to pay the bank interest regardless of whether the rent has been paid or not.

Cost-of-living increases are crippling those who can least afford it. I mentioned earlier the offset of the ambulance levy against the expected increase in electricity prices. It is not a win for people. It is not more money in their pocket. It is an offset. Once again, coupled with wholesale water price hikes and the many other increased costs of living, many Coomera electorate residents will be on the brink.

Before I turn to the issue of police and policing, I would like to place on the parliamentary record my condolences and the condolences of those people of the state seat of Coomera to the family of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding: to his wife, Sonya, his children, little Hudson and baby Grace, and his parents, siblings and extended family. As I am sure all members know, Damian was an officer based at the Coomera Police Station in the Coomera electorate.

Police and policing is the most important issue in my electorate. I note that spending on major capital is down while overall costs have blown out. Beenleigh is a town centre that services the Waterford, Albert and northern Coomera electorates. The residents of this region are some of the greatest victims of Labor's mismanagement. The cost of the refurbishment of the Beenleigh Police Station has blown out by more than \$4.15 million in just one year. I joined with the member for Albert in lobbying for a new police station for the Ormeau area. This area is fast growing and is around halfway between Beenleigh Police Station and Coomera Police Station. There is almost 20 kilometres of M1 between Beenleigh and Coomera stations and that is just too far. Police need to be able to close that gap. But what chance have we got when we see blowouts in budgets like that of Beenleigh Police Station? This government is incapable of financial management. The only chance we have to rein in spending is for Queensland voters to vote this tired, old Labor government out at the next election. Bring on an election now, Premier, and let us get on the road to recovery for the sake of my constituents and all Queenslanders.

In light of the unlikely outcome of a new police station, let me talk now about what we need with current infrastructure in place. We heard earlier this week that the Coomera police district has one officer for more than 1,100 residents. This compares with a state average of one officer for around 450 residents. In short, we need more blue shirts on the streets in the Coomera division—more blue shirts to dissuade potential crooks, and more cars on the road—but before that we need a tactical crime squad. We have the room for them in the new district headquarters. At the moment our current police are simply going from job to job. There is no time to be proactive. In fact, they are not even getting to all the calls. Something like a third of calls are not serviced. There is a very good reason for this. Coomera has around 20 per cent of calls and around 10 to 15 per cent of resources. Do the numbers. That is about two-thirds of the resources needed to service the calls.

My understanding is that a tactical crime squad is not funded in the normal way: through growth. It is my understanding that a tactical crime squad is funded and formed through a one-off staffing allocation. We have the room for them at Coomera. We need this government to have the resolve to give Coomera a tactical crime squad. These squads are proactive. They are out there and moving ahead of the criminals. We need that squad. People are sick to death of what is going on in their backyard.

Once we have the squad in place, we need to play catch-up with the growth equation. We need more blue shirts and more cars on the road to catch up with the callouts we are not doing and to be seen on the streets by the criminals, to deter them. They know when the shift changes happen, when the officers are doing their paperwork at the end of a shift and getting equipment ready at the beginning of a shift. That is when, as a percentage, a far greater number of crimes are committed. We need overlapping shifts such as the Queensland Ambulance Service has, so we have people on the road at all times.

Finally, I turn to small business. In the Coomera electorate, small businesses are hurting. I have already mentioned real estate agents and tradies in the building industry. Members should be assured that small business, the backbone of our economy, is suffering. As an example, the bigger boat builders, many of which are in my electorate, are supported by many small business people renting their premises in the Coomera marine precinct and Horizon Shores marine precinct. I have personal knowledge of the difficulties being experienced, as well as information from others that confirms my understanding of how tough they are doing it. I mentioned earlier that residential tenants are doing it tough, which has a knock-on effect to landlords. The same is the case in the marine industry. Many cannot pay the rent. The impact is that, if evicted, they go on the dole line or move away from this vital industry, which is so important to the local economy. If they move away from the industry, that further affects the likelihood of a recovery in the industry. In turn, we potentially see those sheds left empty, unsuitable for most other industrial uses. This is just an example of the difficult time small business is having.

On the subject of the marine industry, I need to bring to the attention of the House the plight of a local company that has been a cornerstone of the marine industry on the Gold Coast. Indeed, Gold Coast City Marina is the developer of the largest commercial marina in the southern hemisphere. I am proud to say that Gold Coast City Marina is based in the Coomera electorate, in the precinct behind Dreamworld. Gold Coast City Marina has worked with Australian based Leighton Contractors and others, under the name Deep Blue Consortium, to develop a bid for a vacant parcel of land on The Spit. Deep Blue Consortium is the only consortium to bring to the government a fully developed bid for the development of that parcel of land. It has spent in excess of \$2 million and thousands of hours to prepare the bid. When other bidders dropped out of the process, this government encouraged Deep Blue Consortium to continue in the process. Had they stopped at that point, they could have saved tens of thousands of dollars of expense and many hours of effort. The government encouraged them to continue.

On presentation of the completed bid document, the production cost of which was valued at many thousands of dollars, the government rejected the bid outright. The government then called for new expressions of interest at short notice. Deep Blue Consortium confirmed their interest in the process. I am told that, without further discussion, Deep Blue Consortium found out from a media story that it was unsuccessful and that Canada based Brookfield Multiplex is the front runner. Brookfield Multiplex had not been in previous bid processes. According to media reports, the Treasurer has said that the deal with the contractor could be finalised by late this year.

A number of concerns arise out of what has transpired. First of all, why was the original process abandoned without further discussion to resolve any issues? Why did the government not afford Deep Blue Consortium the courtesy of advising them that they were unsuccessful? Why was Deep Blue Consortium, with its previous track record, not included in the latest project bid? After all, it has a very good understanding of the site and what can be achieved. How is it that the Treasurer believes that the whole thing is a done deal before even receiving the completed bid from Brookfield Multiplex? Indeed, how is it that a group can be handed the project with no previous involvement? The suggestion is that something untoward is going on.

Brookfield Multiplex, from a standing start, within less than a three-month time frame, is going to pull together a detailed bid for an \$800 million, or thereabouts, project that the Treasurer believes will be a done deal within months of that time. Has the Treasurer authorised the department to leak or otherwise provide Deep Blue Consortium's intellectual property and/or its list of consultants to this new preferred bidder, to enable it to do what it needs to do in such a short time? If not, how is it that Deep Blue Consortium has been advised by its consultant that it has been contacted by Brookfield Multiplex asking for information about Deep Blue Consortium's bid?

Mr FRASER: I rise to a point of order. The imputations that are being put forward by the member for Coomera not only are totally unsubstantiated and being made up on the spot, but also they are deeply offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn. More to the point, if he has any information to go towards the point he is making, he should immediately provide it to the CMC rather than make the point in here.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): I do not know that there is a point of order, but certainly the Treasurer finds the comments you made offensive. You will withdraw.

Mr CRANDON: I withdraw. How did Brookfield Multiplex know who the consultants were if not told by the government? Can the Treasurer give a guarantee that no-one has provided this information to the preferred bidder and also guarantee that it will not be provided? I further call on the Treasurer to reopen the bidding process to give a well-respected local business with Australian based partners at the very least a chance to provide an alternative to the Brookfield Multiplex bid. If successful, this local consortium, which has a wealth of knowledge in this type of construction, would be using local people who desperately need a shot in the arm. This could be the start of a revitalisation of the local marine industry, giving confidence to those in the industry to hang in and be part of the revitalisation.

I repeat that this budget is an embarrassment for the Treasurer and the government. It is a budget that has delivered little joy to the people of the Coomera electorate.