




Speech by

Hon. Dr Bruce Flegg

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Hansard Tuesday, 19 June 2012

MOTION: BUDGET STRATEGIES

 **Hon. BS FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (5.49 pm): When I heard the Leader of Opposition Business move this motion this morning I shook my head and adjusted my hearing aid. All I could see was the *Seinfeld* episode with George Costanza running across the living room with his pants down around his ankles saying, 'Vandelay! Vandelay!', not just because the Leader of Opposition Business looked and sounded just that ridiculous but because George's 'Vandelay' was also a complete and utter fabrication as is the assertion that the Leader of Opposition Business has put forward for us to debate today.

On 24 March the people of Queensland said that they did not want that lot as their latex salesmen. I wonder what sort of loss it would take for the ALP team opposite—the remnant opposition—to learn and break the habit of defending the absolutely indefensible? They have ended up with seven members. Would they have learnt if they had five members or four members? Even if they got to zero they would only learn because they would not be here to say something as stupid as they have said today.

It took a zero return for General Custer to learn what happened at the Little Big Horn, and this lot are no smarter. The history is writ and everybody in this state knows it except those seven individuals sitting opposite. I am very pleased to second the amendment moved by the Treasurer.

Those opposite claim that they had a strategy. What happened when the drought broke? They had no infrastructure. They had no budget strategy. What happened when the issue at Bundaberg Hospital erupted? They had no budget strategy. They did not have the health infrastructure. What happened when we lost our AAA credit rating? Where was the budget strategy then?

There are records of proceedings in this parliament—and for their education I invite those opposite to have a look at a couple of entries—that show what I mean. On 16 July 2008 at the Estimates Committee B hearing I warned the then Treasurer, Mr Fraser, that there was a slowdown and that he would need to deal with the loss of revenue. His answer was 'no there is not'. On the same day, 16 July 2008, I warned the then Treasurer that, from his own estimates, he was threatening the AAA credit rating. I asked him what level of debt his government could sustain without losing our AAA credit rating. Do you know what his answer was? It was—

We believe that the ... program we have put forward is sustainable. More to the point, as I mentioned earlier, the budget is forecast to operate in surplus.

The piece de resistance was the year before on 10 July 2007 when the then Labor Treasurer was none other than Anna Bligh. I said to Anna Bligh in the estimates committee hearing that the general—

Mr Crandon: She's left.

Dr FLEGG: She got sacked; she has not left. I said that the general government sector borrowing was set to rise from \$3.2 billion in 2006-07 to \$19 billion in 2010-11. This is before the GFC and before the natural disasters. I went on to say—

That gives a combined borrowing of \$51 billion. Minister Bligh, can you identify anything in your forward estimates where you plan to repay any of these borrowings?

She was happy to receive the questions and said—

For each and every one of the nine years we have been in government it has been the practice of the government to pay down debt ...

But she went on to say—

We have unashamedly borrowed to a level we think is responsible and we are able to service that debt. We are very comfortable with that program.

The Commission of Audit interim report says it all: \$100 billion in debt for a state government, not a federal government, with an annual budget of only \$42 billion. They are an embarrassment.