




Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.50 pm): Although I was unable to be at the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee hearing due to my attendance at the Asian Forum on Global Governance in India, I want to place on record some of my observations in the portfolio areas of Main Roads and Local Government. Firstly, the Minister for Main Roads decided that he would once again trot out a line from an article in the *Cairns Post*, which I table.

Tabled paper: Article from the Cairns Post, dated 20 April 2012, titled 'Road to a better Bruce' [[1472](#)].

The line regarding the 'mis-spending of state money by investing in the Bruce Highway' is paraphrased and not a direct quote. The minister has been falsely dining out on this for six months. The context of the statement made simply highlighted two facts: first, funding for the Bruce Highway is primarily a federal responsibility because it is a National Highway and, second, there are state controlled roads that require the attention of the Queensland government.

Unlike the Bruce Highway, the Peninsula Development Road or the Kennedy Development Road will not draw the cameras the minister so dearly craves. But they are important roads nonetheless, but not important to the LNP which failed to provide funding for state controlled roads in the 2012-13 budget, with \$1.6 billion over four years being stripped from the Queensland road network. The problem is that the estimates hearing continued the LNP's misleading and slanted picture of funding for the Bruce Highway. It has conveniently tried to airbrush from history its own federal National Party leader Warren Truss, who as transport minister in the Howard government starved Queensland of roads funding with an average of \$100 million a year for the Bruce Highway. This compares with federal Labor's contributions averaging \$500 million a year since 2007. So, if the minister wants to be honest, any Bruce Highway 'crisis' is the result of his own party's chronic underfunding. If he wants to point the finger of blame, he needs to point it at one of his own.

The previous Labor state governments provided around \$114 million a year for the past 10 years on top of funds from the federal government. This got work moving on the Bruce Highway and has resulted in the installation of 52 new overtaking lanes, the fixing of 100 dangerous black spots, building some 20 new rest areas and upgrading a further nine existing rest areas. Does the minister deny that the LNP will spend just one per cent or \$10 million this year out of its promised \$1 billion on the Bruce Highway or the next financial year when there will be only another \$10 million, yet by comparison this year's LNP budget found \$17 million for roadworks in the Premier's electorate of Ashgrove in Brisbane. The fact is more and more people are realising you cannot trust a word the LNP says, especially when it comes to its policies for regional Queensland. As I have said all along, the LNP's magical mystery bus tour of the Bruce Highway would produce by and large the same projects as identified under the previous government's 20-year Bruce Highway strategy, and that is what we have seen.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! There is far too much audible conversation. I cannot hear the member speak.

Mr PITT: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. This whole process has been a cynical exercise to blame federal Labor if it does not provide the funding, otherwise the recent state budget would have seen the LNP put some real money on the table like it claimed it would before the election.

I also want to make some remarks regarding the Local Government portfolio. Given the LNP's constant misshaping of the facts around debt levels in Queensland, I was very interested in the section where the Minister for Local Government was asked questions about debt taken on by local governments in Queensland. After avoiding questions about which council in Queensland had the largest amount of debt, the minister finally stated that it was the Brisbane City Council with a debt of \$1.16 billion. However, the figure quoted by the minister contradicts information published by the Queensland Treasury Corporation, which states that the Brisbane City Council's debt is \$1.828 billion. It is concerning to think that the minister did not know the financial circumstances of the largest council in Queensland and, for that matter, Australia, nor that Legacy Way was a toll road—the biggest local government infrastructure project in Australia.

The minister suggested that the Brisbane City Council was in a better situation than the state when the current government took office. In fact, the debt levels of the Brisbane City Council mean that it has a higher debt-to-income ratio than the state government. As had to be pointed out to the minister in questioning, the Brisbane City Council's net financial liabilities to revenue ratio was 111.1 per cent in 2011-12 as detailed in the 2011-12 Brisbane City Council budget and annual plan. This was higher than the state's level of 102 per cent as outlined in the midyear review. Thanks to the debt locked in by the current Queensland Treasurer and Premier during their time at Brisbane City Council, next financial year—2013-14—the debt ratio for the Brisbane City Council is expected to peak at 157.9 per cent, much higher than Queensland's peak debt ratio at the midyear review of 123 per cent. It was hypocritical for the minister not to show a greater level of concern for the debt levels of the Brisbane City Council and concerning that he could not explain why he did not understand the relative debt levels of the largest council and the Queensland government.

However, the minister should be aware that there are some saving graces, because with the bricks there are some bouquets as well. The minister quite ably captained the touch football team on Monday between Country over City with a resounding win of six to three. It is worth putting on the record. Unfortunately, the Minister for Transport was unable to come up with the goods but in this circumstance the Minister for Local Government did. Unfortunately, this is another thing that the Premier is in complete denial about—he just cannot believe that Country has beaten City. To the Minister for Local Government, I congratulate you on your ball-handling skills.