



Speech by


## Hon. David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Thursday, 13 September 2012

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### APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; FISCAL REPAIR AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government) (3.16 pm): I am truly humbled to stand in this House today and know that, just like the men and women who serve in the 73 councils around the state, the Department of Local Government is doing its bit to help Queensland reclaim prosperity. I am also profoundly grateful to be part of a government which had the courage to assess the threat that was posed to each and every Queenslander by enormous debt and deficit, the resolve to do something about it and the brains to lead us towards a future so much brighter and more hopeful than the past we are about to leave behind. This budget marks the real beginning of our great state shaking off the contaminated dust of Labor's disgraceful waste and unaffordable spending and walking into an era of confidence and optimism. My hope is that Queensland's local governments will be at the forefront of that journey. While assessing how to deliver more effective and less regimented support to councils, the local government department has looked hard at the bottom line and plotted a path to get more bang for less buck.

I am proud to be the leader of a department that has turned to the task of achieving a leaner, more efficient service to councils with the gusto and courage one would hope for in people fortunate enough to assist a level of government closest to the people. It is another source of pride for me this year that regional Queensland will be the biggest recipient of the local government department's funding. In a nutshell, money is being directed towards communities to provide the services and infrastructure projects that will help them improve the lives of their residents. We will set aside funds to prepare councils for changes to the Local Government Act and City of Brisbane Act that will cut the red tape and onerous reporting requirements that have held councils back and stopped them being as responsive and proactive as they know they can be. This is what councils need. Their ratepayers judge them on the quality of their roads and water coming out of the tap, not by some sort of document that has to get checked off by Brisbane each and every year; to be able to deliver for themselves, not to be burdened by a one-size-fits-all model. The budget also includes training for Indigenous councils to enhance financial and asset management and land use planning. I am determined to set Indigenous councils on a path towards sustainability. We owe this to our first people.

As the members of this House have just heard, the Department of Local Government looked hard to make sure that it would put its funding to the best possible use. There will be real challenges as well as triumphs ahead, but there can be no doubt that the emphasis for 2012-13 is on delivering to councils in regional Queensland the most responsible budget for the times that we find ourselves in or stepping up the support that will foster the recovery, growth and improvement in the state's communities. Better times are ahead and we are heading towards them with this budget.

I stand in this place today not only as the minister but first and foremost as the proud member for Mundingburra. As one of the five LNP members to serve Townsville, the interests of that great northern city are part of who we are and what we hope to achieve in this chamber. I am honoured to have the member for Townsville join me today. I want the people of this great city to realise that a government can live within

its means whilst still delivering crucial infrastructure. The people of Townsville have waited a long time to secure weatherproof access to an essential road in the city, which floods far too often. This budget will therefore start work on flood proofing the notorious Blakey's Crossing. The LNP promised to finally end the blame game and that is precisely what we are doing. Yes, this is a council road, but it is not fair to ask local government to upgrade an arterial that is vital because it is a key part of the entire network. That was my attitude when I was with the council and it will remain my attitude despite my new role. There will be no gun-to-the-head funding deal that was seen under the previous hokey-pokey-doing minister. Instead, this government will commit \$24 million to be provided to councils when they are ready to use it.

In Health, the Newman government will inject \$14.7 million over three years to establish paediatric intensive care services at Townsville Hospital. Although I am proud of the small role that I played in getting this issue on the agenda, the credit must go to Dr Eric Guazzo, who led a grassroots campaign against the Brisbane based bureaucracy that just did not get it. Nothing gave me more pleasure than to see the start of the local hospital and health board, which puts an end to the Brisbane-comes-first mentality. A new, six-bed child and youth unit and a day care centre at Kirwan Health Campus will receive \$10 million.

Despite the state's serious financial challenges, the LNP's vision was never to cower away from the storm. We are dedicated to providing for the community and investing in key infrastructure to help the state regain momentum and, indeed, end the approach that we have seen of constantly playing catch-up with our infrastructure. Let us change the way we do business. Let us deliver ahead of the game. This is an honest and responsible budget that will deliver lasting benefits to regional Queensland. Let us not overlook the savings that will be shared by all Queenslanders that this budget will deliver. For the first time in a long time Queenslanders wake up this week without any new taxes on families. Sixty-three million dollars will be spent to freeze the standard electricity tariff, saving families an average of \$120 on their bills. Two and a half million family vehicles will now have their registration frozen for the whole term of government—yet another promise delivered. Homebuyers can save up to \$7,000 because we have reinstated the principal place of residence concession for stamp duty. Under this government the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, which assists patients accessing specialist medical services not available in their immediate local area, will also be doubled. And has that not been a long time coming!

But perhaps one of the most pleasing changes has been the changing of the maintenance regime in schools. I want to highlight some of the issues facing the electorate of Mundingburra, which I represent. At Annandale State School, the taps in the toilets are so bad that water gushes out every time the kids turn them on. At Cranbrook State School, we have roofs that leak each and every wet season. In Vincent, we have painting that needs to be done, tired guttering and yet more leaking roofs. I have to tell the story of what I saw before the election of practical, visionary, forward-thinking parents. They sat down with us—the now members for Townsville and Thuringowa and I, as well as the members for Burdekin and Hinchinbrook—and told us of their frustration at having dedicated parents on P&Cs who are capable of doing a job for their kids; not looking to line their pockets but looking to help their children. They told us stories of jobs that they thought parents in the school could do for around \$20,000, but they had received a quote of \$60,000 to do that same job. This change represents a fundamental shift in the way in which this state does business. We do not have to have this mentality that the government must do everything for us. There are capable people in the private sector—good people who own businesses, who employ people and who are not the money-sucking hungry people who they have been made out to be in the past 48 hours—who want the best for their kids and who can deliver more efficiently than any government department could ever dream.

Most people in this place will know that when Labor lost the state's AAA credit rating I was serving my community in the Townsville City Council. I knew how much that credit dive was going to cost just my council alone to service the interest on our loans and I knew the misery that would be shared around the state. Instead of the state being famous for its growth and opportunities, Queensland became infamous for having the worst credit rating of all the states. I want to point out a couple of comments from mayors in regional Queensland—mayors who understand that this government, sadly, will not have rivers of gold to be able to throw at them, who will not be able to fly over the top of their cities and shires in helicopters pouring money out of the window because of the legacy we have been left. I refer first to the Mayor of the Cassowary Coast Regional Council, Mr Bill Shannon, who said—

I'm very supportive of what the government is doing and it's absolutely necessary to get that AAA credit rating back.

Rick Britton, Mayor of the Boulia Shire Council, stated—

If you take over a business or property and it's in massive debt, you have to make some hard decisions for the long term. It takes a lot longer to come out of debt than to go into debt. I am very disappointed after 10 years of a mining boom this state is where it is, because it should be on top of the world. We understood this would be a tough budget but if we can make the hard decisions now, there will be light at the end of the tunnel.

When I visited Boulia, the council there was not after money; all it wanted was a government to free them from restrictive legislation. All it wanted was for the then department of environmental resource management to approve something for it. When you hear stories of councils in regional Queensland who

are just sitting back for years waiting for what should be the most simple approvals—approvals for a little bit of land in unallocated state land of thousands of hectares, just a slice of that, to bury their people—

**Mr Hathaway:** How wide was it?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** Just one square metre of land to put in an electricity pole to create an industrial estate. These councils are not after a free handout; they just want the state to get out of their way and let them do business. The situation is no different from the businesses that many of those in this chamber ran before they came here. You have to live within your means. You cannot keep borrowing each and every day for everyday expenses. It does not work. Any business that was run the way that this state government was run would be in a world of hurt.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** It would be. I take that interjection. You cannot have that attitude in a business and survive. This will be a government that turns around the state's finances. It will make some tough decisions and it will have to upset some people. That is the sad reality of the legacy that we have been left.

In conclusion, I believe the tide has started to turn. I believe we have a government that has a vision: a vision for a stronger Queensland; a vision for a place where local communities matter; where they can control their own destiny; where the people who run for public office are able to have a say on what happens in their cities and shires. Instead of wasting money on an ever-increasing interest bill, with the measures this budget introduces we will have more money to spend on delivering the services Queensland needs—the schools, roads, hospitals, police, teachers and nurses—and we will also better support councils to do the job they were elected for: to help their communities achieve progress and prosper. I commend the bills to the House.