




Speech by

Hon. David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

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

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government) (12.06 am): Can I start by also adding my thanks to the chairman, the member for Warrego. As a young councillor, he was always there at those conferences. He did not just rush in and rush out; he was there to give his time. He has been a great mentor for me over the years. Indeed, I thank all of his committee and the great interest that they showed in what is an important process of the budget for 2012-13. I also thank my departmental staff, my own ministerial staff and, indeed, the staff of the parliament for their efforts.

I thought I would start by picking up some of the points of the debate. First of all, I thank those on the government side for their comments to the three ministers. It means a great deal to us. I thank them very much. To those opposite, I would love to start by critiquing the contribution of the member for South Brisbane but, as she again failed to discuss local government, that would be difficult. All I got from the member for Bundamba was Marco Polo. That leads me to the member for Mulgrave. The member for Mulgrave continues this line about the Brisbane City Council and comparing the debt of the Brisbane City Council to the disastrous situation that this government inherited. At a time when we have councils under genuine financial stress because of what has been put on them, the powers that have been stripped from them and the responsibilities that have been thrust on them, I find it intriguing that the sole interest of the member for Mulgrave is one of the few councils that is, in fact, rated strong. To put it in perspective—and I will use rough numbers—on a ratio of debt per person, Brisbane ratepayers have about \$1,800 per person and the state government has about \$16,000 per person. So I use those figures to provide a genuine contrast.

I turn now to the budget for the portfolio of Local Government. Although the questioning from the member for Mackay did not really go down this path, I would like to take the opportunity to do it myself and discuss something that will happen in this year's local government budget and that is that the money available for councils under the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program will go from \$8 million to \$63 million. Members might be wondering how on earth this occurs. I can tell members how.

Last year in a budget approval of \$45 million, local government was only able to spend \$8 million. I can tell members why.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Member for Bundamba, I warned you. I am now warning you under 253A. I understand you have been warned previously.

Mrs MILLER: I never said anything.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is your conduct. You have been laughing and giggling for the last 40 minutes. I am not tolerating it any further. That is it. Next time I hear you, you are out.

Mr CRISAFULLI: In fairness, I think she was saying 'Marco Polo' again, and we have located her, which is wonderful. To get to where we were, why was it that only \$8 million of a \$45 million fund was spent? The answer is simple and that is because despite the fact that applications were called in the middle of the year, despite the fact that they were assessed in the 2011 calendar year, the minister for local

government chose not to make those announcements until the 11th hour, until the state election was called. The cynic in me would say it was a purely political decision to use the grants and subsidies program as an almighty pork barrel.

What then happened was councils went into a period of caretaker for twice as long because of the fact their elections were put back and they were unable to spend that money. To the great credit of the Treasurer, he has carried that funding over to this calendar year as well as implemented the next round of local government grants and subsidies so that in real dollar terms local government will get a huge financial boost. What they will also get, and what we clearly discussed in that committee, is a state government that understands them and will work with them. We have signed a Partners in Government Agreement that shows we mean business. We will clearly put mayors and councils back in charge in our changes to the act.

In conclusion, I truly believe that the role of the local government department can be that go-to department for local councils as they seek a better deal from government. I again thank the committee for their interest. I again thank the chairman for his stewardship and look forward to next year's event being one of joy and harmony.