



Speech by


# Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.34 pm): I rise to support the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2012, the Appropriation Bill 2012 and the Fiscal Repair Amendment Bill which were introduced by the Treasurer, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, this week on 11 September. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the honourable the Treasurer for his hard work and dedication to the task of bringing this state back into fiscal repair. I would also like to thank all of the cabinet ministers for the work that they and their departments have carried out. As a member of the Treasurer's cabinet budget review subcommittee, I had the opportunity to see firsthand the effort that the cabinet ministers and their departments put in on behalf of all Queenslanders. As the Treasurer has stated, the first line of the incoming government briefs said—

Queensland's fiscal position and outlook is unsustainable and restoration must be an urgent priority for this term of government.

On coming to government we knew that the state's financial position was compromised, but for this to be the first line in Queensland's Treasury brief immediately crystalised the enormous job before the Treasurer and the Newman government. The view from Queensland Treasury was reinforced when the government received the interim report of the independent Commission of Audit. The Treasurer established the commission as one of the priority items in our first 100-day plan. As we have stated, it was chaired by the former Treasurer, Peter Costello, and also included former Under Treasurer, Doug McTaggart, and James Cook University vice-chancellor, Professor Sandra Harding. The report stated—

... in recent years, the Government of Queensland embarked on an unsustainable level of spending which has jeopardised the financial position of the State.

The main message I took from the independent commission's report was that the previous government let expenditure simply get away from it. Expenditure became a measure of success rather than the outcomes it achieved. This was most relevant in Health where recurrent funding increased by 83 per cent from 2006 to 2010 but hospital activity, measured by weighted activity units, only increased by 21 per cent.

The Newman government is focused on outcomes achieved rather than merely increasing the volume of money spent. The state of Queensland, or any state for that matter, does not have unlimited resources to spend without any regard to the outcomes that can be achieved. In the Newman government's response to the interim report, it outlined its fiscal principles which focused on stabilising and then reducing the debt, achieving a fiscal balance by 2014-15, ensuring a competitive tax environment and fully funding long-term liabilities such as employee superannuation. It is pleasing to note that the Treasurer has delivered on all of these principles and his budget has put Queensland on a course to stabilise debt. This will reduce interest costs by \$1.3 billion and free up more government funding for the essential front-line services.

For me, the thing that illustrates the need for this fiscal repair is the fact that, in the past decade, interest repayments on debt have been the fastest growing expense of the government. It is more than has been spent on health, more than has been spent on disabilities and more than has been spent on education. That is simply unsustainable and this budget moves to end that trend. The budget charts a

course back to a fiscal surplus in 2014-15, ensuring that the state debt does not reach the \$85 billion predicted by Labor's own budget papers. This budget also forecasts a small operating surplus next year. The turnaround is remarkable but it is no accident. It is the function of a considered and detailed process.

Very briefly, I would like to touch on the Newman government's plan to reduce red tape and regulation and, as Assistant Minister for Regulatory Reform, I am very interested in this. This budget has committed funding to the Office of Best Practice Regulation, which has been set up under the Queensland Competition Authority. The OBPR's initial review will focus on regulation that is unnecessarily burdensome and has significant reach while achieving potentially large benefits from reform.

With an estimated regulatory burden of around one per cent of our gross state product—some \$2.5 billion—this should not be too difficult. Each department has also been assigned a regulatory reduction target. This target will form part of the departmental chief executive's performance indicators which will be reported against annually by the OBPR.

Very importantly, the families and communities of the Nanango electorate will reap the rewards of this government's fiscal repair outlined in this once-in-a-generation budget. We have made some tough decisions, but I believe we have to reset the state's finances on a sustainable path. This budget delivers cost-of-living relief for families. We are investing in local schools, hospitals and roads—all while keeping our debt and deficit under control.

The families in my electorate will benefit from freezes to the car registration and electricity tariffs. We have reinstated the principal place of residence concession for people buying their family home and we are now offering first home buyers \$15,000 to purchase a newly built home or one off the plan, an initiative which will also boost construction activity. Our small local tradies and our builders will benefit from this great reform. Small and medium businesses are also benefitting by paying less payroll tax.

One of the major announcements which will significantly benefit the constituents of my electorate is the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, with over \$100 million being spent over four years to double the subsidy to 30 c per kilometre and the accommodation subsidy to \$60 per night. This had not changed since the eighties. The Kingaroy Hospital is also receiving the much needed funding for a specialist surgeon starting in January next year, meaning more procedures will be able to be performed locally, saving people the time and stress of travel out of the electorate.

I am also very pleased about the \$4.9 million we are providing to employ full-time prep teacher aides in classrooms, and my electorate of Nanango has benefitted significantly from this. The children at the much needed schools of Yarraman, Benarkin, Wooroolin, Mount Tarampa and Coominya will benefit when the program rolls out in 2013. As an aside, I am looking forward to attending the Coominya State School on Saturday for their centenary celebrations.

**Mr Rickuss:** It will be a good day.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It will be a good day. I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. I am also very proud to be representing the minister there on that day.

Disability services in my electorate will also receive a wonderful boost through the grant programs, and social rental housing throughout my electorate has been flagged as being upgraded. What is most exciting to me about this budget is that it is a regional budget concentrating on the regions. More than 75 per cent of the government's capital expenditure will take place outside of Brisbane. We have also introduced the Royalties for the Regions, a program which sees \$490 million spent in the regions.

The 30 public schools throughout the Nanango electorate will benefit from the Newman government's \$200 million Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund which, as has been spoken about in this House today, will allow state school P&Cs—the mums and dads of each of the local state communities—up to \$160,000 to fix the massive backlog of maintenance issues in our state schools. The Principal of Taabinga State School—a great local school in Kingaroy—Susan Beatty, said that she was happy when she heard about the new Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund. Previously, her small budget of about \$26,000 per year would never cover the major maintenance needed at that school. For many years she has had to put off the major jobs of laying new carpet and painting the school buildings, but now she is very excited that these maintenance jobs can be done and also that they may be able to be done by local tradies and builders.

The Goombungee State School was delighted as they may well get the much needed door handles for the inside of their classrooms. Currently, if they have a lockdown, which apparently has happened, they cannot lock the doors from inside. However, to have them installed they were originally quoted \$500 per handle. So they have been putting off that decision. That is one job that that school will be able to cross off their list and the school will be safer in times of crisis.

High school students in the southern part of my electorate, including Crows Nest, Goombungee and Haden, can now look forward to a new high school to be built at Highfields. I thank the Treasurer for this as well as the member for Toowoomba North, Trevor Watts. He and I have been lobbying hard for this new high school. We are looking for it to be up and running by the start of the 2015 school year. Planning for the \$35 million stage 1, including community consultation, should be completed by November this year. We

also have the year 7 pilot happening at the Crows Nest State High School next year. On top of this, high school students keen to undertake training in agriculture can be safe in the knowledge that the courses offered at the Emerald Agricultural College and Longreach Pastoral College are ready and available for the 2013 intake of students. Thanks must go to Minister McVeigh, local advisory boards and agricultural stakeholders who have committed to fixing the mess left by the previous administration. I know that we are dedicated to turning the colleges around to ensure they deliver what the industry needs. In the Nanango electorate we are also providing for a sport and recreation officer within the Somerset region.

This budget also invests heavily in the roads network of the Nanango electorate, with more than \$100 million in joint federal and state government funding allocated to road projects on the New England Highway. This section of the highway was once named by the RACQ as the second worst highway in Queensland. We are also continuing the spend of money on the D'Aguilar Highway through the Blackbutt Range, which was severely damaged by the 2011 floods. There is also \$10 million to start work on a new bridge at Bum Bum Creek on the New England Highway, which is in between Crows Nest and—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I write my own speeches. The long-awaited new Kingaroy Ambulance Station will also be built. I am very pleased that the minister was able to deliver this in the budget as it was promised in the last budget that it was going to be built. However, the last budget had only money for its planning. The Kingaroy Ambulance Station will be built, and construction is set to start in the new year. An amount of \$2 million will be invested in the Kingaroy Hospital to prepare a master plan for a new main block and update essential fire safety issues. This hospital in my electorate will benefit from vital medical equipment upgrades and improvements.

It is also important to note that we are making substantial investments to sustain operations at Tarong and Tarong North Power Station, including overhauls of Tarong Power Station units 1 and 2. At Meandu Mine there will be investment in a dragline overhaul, replacement of mine fleet equipment, mine exploration and development projects, and an upgrade of the coal-handling processing plant. This capital expenditure will help maintain infrastructure which forms an essential part of our community as it provides so much employment.

For our local governments there will be nearly \$60 million for Operation Queenslander in the Somerset Regional Council area and \$82 million for the South Burnett Regional Council. This ensures my local councils can continue the important work of reconnecting, rebuilding and improving our communities following the 2011 floods.

We are encouraging agriculture and food production. I am excited about the \$4.8 million partnership with QUT for research into pulses. We need to embrace the opportunities that are the growing economies of Asia and India. We in the South Burnett are also lucky to install a new crop protection officer at the Bjelke-Petersen Research Station.

In relation to regional planning, there is \$1 million for the preparation of the Darling Downs Regional Plan, an important instrument that will help resolve conflict between the agriculture and resource sectors and ensure the region grows in a managed and sustainable way. It will allow us to deal with urban expansion, the timing and sequencing of infrastructure and enhance tourism opportunities. It will also assist with the management of environmental impacts.

The Nanango electorate has been left alone for so very long. So I am very pleased to be able to announce other key projects such as \$2.2 million for flood remediation works at Wivenhoe Dam, \$1.8 million for works at Somerset Dam, continued construction of the much needed Kilcoy Water Treatment Plant and \$12.7 million for improvements to the Wivenhoe Power Station. Also, local tourism receives a boost with \$21,000 to help restore the Taromeo Cemetery. I am also pleased that the tourism minister has announced \$3 million for regional Queensland events. I am very pleased to have Mr Shannon Scott of Kingaroy on the tourism minister's advisory board so I can ensure that my region is well looked after.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! There is too much audible conversation from across the chamber.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is also pleasing that disability services have been provided for within the South Burnett, Somerset and Toowoomba regions.

This is a budget that delivers a brighter future for Queensland and encourages confidence. It will encourage long-term job and economic growth across the four pillars of our economy and ensure the cost of living remains low for our communities. I am proud to have worked with the Treasurer in some parts of delivering this budget. I am also proud to be part of a reforming government. In his speech the honourable the Treasurer stated—

Reform can be unpopular in some parts of our community. It challenges the elites, the unions, the industrial relations clubs and the commentariat.

It challenges those for whom the old ways were the most lucrative, the most comfortable, and that entrenched their own feelings of self-importance.

But in the 21st century reform of government is a 'must do' task. And we are the 'CAN-DO' government, determined to achieve it.

I am also proud to be part of a government that is prepared to make the tough decisions in the best interests of all Queenslanders. Again, I would like to congratulate the Treasurer on bringing down this once-in-a-generation budget, and I commend the bills to the House.