



Speech by


**Hon. Glen Elmes**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

Hansard Friday, 14 September 2012

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

 **Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (10.42 am): I rise to support the Appropriation Bill and to support the strong, decisive and correct action this government is taking to reverse years of Labor budget mismanagement. Budgets are defining moments in the life of any government. They mark the determination of the government to look after the future prosperity of the state rather than doing what is easy today. This budget shows that this government has what it takes to do what is best for Queensland today and into the future. This budget meets the responsibility test of putting the state's future ahead of short-term initiatives which appease particular interest groups but are not in the interests of the general population. As the Treasurer said on Tuesday, this is the most important Queensland budget in a generation.

As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, I have embraced the challenges of addressing the disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this state. My portfolio responsibilities are driven by improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Employment, sustainable enterprise and land tenure reform to provide improved options for homeownership are high on my list as a means for Indigenous people to achieve better outcomes. The Newman government's Indigenous agenda is focused on ensuring that state government programs and fundings are directed towards improving the stability and sustainability of Indigenous communities. Our focus is on overcoming disadvantage in Indigenous communities by providing support and structures which promote better social and economic outcomes in areas like health, housing, education and employment. Indigenous Queenslanders and residents who have recently made Australia their home can look forward to better targeted and more focused programs included as part of the first Newman government budget.

Necessary budget savings introduced as part of whole-of-government efforts to get the state's finances back on track will be offset by more efficient service delivery and not duplicating federal government programs. Other savings to be made across the portfolio will be achieved through reduced publication and management costs and reducing some funding for multicultural community support groups, advisory services and events. Departmental resources will be focused on working across government agencies to deliver better coordinated policies, programs and services that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Queensland state budget includes funding to support the continued development and growth of strong multicultural communities across the state through funding initiatives that promote multiculturalism.

Next year will see the emergence of a new week-long multicultural celebration stretching the length of the state. We are going to revamp the Queensland Multicultural Festival to expand it from a one-day Brisbane based event to a week-long program of branded events right across the state. We are a truly multicultural state and we need to consider options to reflect and celebrate that across all of our regions. I want to be sure that what we do is as relevant in Cairns as it is in Brisbane. There will be a Brisbane event

and it will be a highlight rather than the totality of the Queensland Multicultural Festival. Other week-long celebrations will be targeted at the state's Italian and Asian heritage.

The recently released 2011 census data confirmed the continuing growth of multiculturalism in the state with more than one in five Queenslanders born overseas. We continue to support multicultural groups and communities through initiatives such as the Multicultural Queensland Partnerships Program, the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships Program and the Community Action for a Multicultural Society Program. Funding is improved for the LAMP and CAMS programs to support the employment of local coordinators. The Multicultural Queensland Partnerships Program provides funding for community projects or multicultural events in 2013. I was pleased to announce last Friday that grants for up to \$10,000 are now available under the program for events in 2013. Funding for activities under the partnerships program will be available under four categories: multicultural festivals, cultural heritage events, strengthening capacity projects and week-long festivals. The grants are broader than in previous years, providing the opportunity for individual communities to tailor celebrations and events which reflect their specific multicultural identity.

The budget for my department also includes funding for more than \$9 million for initiatives on Cape York. More than \$4 million has been allocated to the extension of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial, which is run in cooperation with the federal government and the Cape York Institute. The trial aims to develop additional services for the four communities of Hope Vale, Aurukun, Coen and Mossman Gorge. The continuation of the trial was welcomed by Noel Pearson who said he looked forward to working with me and my department and the Queensland government to progress the reforms that are underway in Cape York.

We will also be providing \$400,000 in this budget to support the core operations of the Cape York Institute for the work it does in developing Indigenous economic and social policy and supporting the development of current and future Cape York leaders. There is also \$3.8 million to continue the Cape York Tenure Resolution Program which seeks to return ownership of land on Cape York to local Aboriginal people while protecting areas of high conservation value. The total budget allocation for this project in 2012-13 is \$6.3 million, with an additional \$2.5 million provided through the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. There is also more than \$1 million for capital works which will create jobs and provide healthy eating options for some of Queensland's most remote Aboriginal communities. The funding will enable the completion of a new retail store on Saibai Island and the rejuvenation of a shopping precinct at Hope Vale which will support small business and economic opportunities for the local area.

One of the best ways for people to improve their economic circumstances is to secure long-term meaningful employment. That is why within my department I am pleased to have created an economic development agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through employment and business opportunities in Queensland's public, private and community sectors. It will be focused on how the Queensland government can broker greater opportunities for Indigenous people to find work in the private sector. This is particularly relevant for industries like mining, which are often located adjacent to remote Indigenous communities where there are few other employment opportunities.

If there was some joy to be derived yesterday from travelling to Hope Vale to be a part of Mr Deeral's funeral, it was to be in the community itself and see the new banana plantation that they have developed and the other areas that they are preparing for cultivation. What the Hope Vale community is doing to expand and create employment and an economic base for the community is incredible.

In conclusion, I make some observations about the benefit of the budget for my electorate of Noosa. The budget was developed in difficult financial times, but still provides new initiatives for local communities that will particularly benefit schools and households in the Noosa electorate. This budget will generate local employment and reinvigorate the Noosa economy. In addition to the many state-wide initiatives to cut the cost of living for families, Noosa residents will benefit from specific budget items, including \$1 million for the construction of the four-kilometre David Low Highway cycle way, \$75,000 to complete the Girraween Sports Complex at Noosa Heads, funding for the construction of a rock protection wall and geotextile groynes to protect the Noosa Spit from further erosion as well as regeneration and stabilisation of the beach, and \$97,000 for the fitout of the multipurpose centre at the Coolum State High School. The budget provides \$31.7 million to begin construction of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, which is a demonstration of this government's intention to give the Sunshine Coast the infrastructure it needs.

I am particularly pleased to see the new schools maintenance program, which provides funding to government schools for minor projects and capital works. Seven schools within the Noosa electorate will each qualify for up to \$160,000 over two years. That is more than \$1 million available for the Noosa economy, meaning employment for local tradespeople who will undertake the work. The grants also give power back to each local school community to decide what each school needs. If we spread the application further, but it is still local, to take in the old Noosa shire area, there are 10 eligible schools that will mean an additional \$1.6 million flowing into the local community.

Hopefully, it will not be too much longer until I can again refer to the local government area in which I live as the 'Noosa shire'. Recently I was particularly pleased to support the delivery of a petition to the local government minister as the first step in a process to return a Noosa shire council entity to the people

of the northern Sunshine Coast. The fact that more than 2,000 more signatures than required were collected shows just how passionately the people of Noosa feel about their region and its right to exist as a separate council area. Noel Playford and his supporters have done a fantastic job in gathering so many signatures in such a short period. As well as delivering, I think, close to 9,500 signatures in postcard form to the local government minister, there was another box of postcards that were filled in by people who own properties in Noosa but do not live in Noosa, so they were not on the electoral roll and could not be counted as part of the total. It was a very significant step.

This is a very significant part of the process to reverse the March 2007 travesty when the Beattie Labor government rushed through legislation that did away with the right of people in Noosa to decide whether or not they wanted to be part of an amalgamated Sunshine Coast council. I can remember sitting on the other side of the House when that was debated. The Treasurer of the time, Andrew Fraser, sat over here. He pointed at me from across the floor and said, 'You will never do it'. I say to the House, thank goodness for Saxon Rice because that particular ex-Treasurer has been designated to the history books, where he belongs. Over the past years I have spent a lot of time and effort fighting for Noosa's resurrection and I will continue to do so until Labor's heavy-handed obliteration of the Noosa shire is reversed. Whether or not we succeed is a little bit further down the track. The important thing is to get to the vote so that Noosa people can make that decision.

However, today's focus is on the state budget. This is a budget for the future, which sets Queensland's finances on the way to recovery and breaks us free from the addiction to debt and deficit. This is a once-in-a-generation budget targeted at local communities to provide the right services to the right people. I commend the bills to the House.