



Speech by


**Howard Hobbs**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (10.07 pm): I am pleased to talk to the 2012 budget to bring Queensland back into the black. I welcome this state budget as it gets debt under control and will free Queenslanders' hip pockets from a future of debt and decline. It is about generational change with debt management and investment in front-line services, better infrastructure and delivery at a local level. These hard decisions will stabilise debt at \$81.7 billion instead of \$86.3 billion in 2014-15 and in 2015-16 debt will be \$6.6 billion lower than the Commission of Audit predicted. That is a significant change. This is one of the largest changes in direction in budgetary terms in Queensland's history. Achieving these cost savings means that families do not have to endure increased taxes and charges to pay off the previous government's debt and ongoing deficits.

The choice for future years was to either keep on paying \$1,000 per person a year indexed or go with the LNP plan. The reduction in interest payments of \$1.3 billion is equivalent to building 26 primary schools each year. What a turnaround, what a change and what a difference. All election commitments are fully funded, including \$495 million for the Royalties for the Regions program to fund regional community infrastructure programs; \$146.9 million over four years to deliver an additional 1,100 new police officers by 2015-16; an increase in the payroll threshold tax from \$1 million to \$1.1 million in 2012-13, with further increases of \$100,000 each year until that reaches \$1.6 million in July 2017; a freeze on car registrations for more than 2.5 million family vehicles; a reinstating of the principal place of residence concessional rate of stamp duty, saving Queenslanders up to \$7,175 when buying the family home; freezing tariff 11, saving families an average of \$120 on annual electricity bills; the provision of \$100 million over four years for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme to assist with access to specialist medical services, which had not been changed in 20-odd years but the LNP has done it in its very first budget.

Turning to the Public Service, we on this side of the House do understand and accept the difficulties of job uncertainty. However, it had to be done. We had to turn around the state. It is estimated there will be \$3.7 billion in forward savings due to the reduction of 14,000 full-time public servant positions, of which 10,600 are redundancies. It is hard and difficult, and we feel for the people impacted.

We have given a commitment to seriously attack overregulation and look to smarter, better, simpler solutions to the way that government services are provided in Queensland. Under ongoing and new commitments, \$1.3 billion will be provided to construct, expand and redevelop hospitals across Queensland. What a significant change that is. There will be a 7.4 per cent increase in the Health budget to over \$11.8 billion. An additional \$4.8 million will be provided to research and develop Queensland as the food bowl of Asia. New funding of \$200 million will help to address the maintenance back log in public schools and to address existing priority issues.

**Mr Cripps:** Good stuff.

**Mr HOBBS:** Absolutely. We are untying QBuild from this program. P&Cs can go out and get three quotes from local builders or service providers, who will be able to do the job. We believe that may even

free up another 20 per cent of that funding which, in fact, may build up the \$200 million to \$270 million. Non-government schools are also being provided with help, with funding of \$76.25 million. There is help for all education across this state.

There is new funding of \$15 million for a three-year trial to assist elderly parent carers of people with a disability in transition to new care arrangements. That is a compassionate issue that is important. Of course, there is funding for the \$15 million first home owners construction grant to revitalise the construction sector, which is welcome. On top of this, we have committed \$1.4 million to expand support for students with disabilities, which will see an additional 30 speech-language pathologists working in Queensland state schools. There will be additional funding of \$1 million over four years to support Queensland schools' access to chaplaincy services and \$1 million will be provided over four years to develop a school education program to teach children how to protect themselves.

The government has approved \$11 million in funding for Queensland's 14 natural resource management bodies, which is very important. I acknowledge the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines in the chamber tonight. In my area alone, the Condamine Alliance will get \$800,000, the Desert Channels of Queensland will get \$775,000, the Queensland Murray Darling Basin Committee will receive \$800,000 and the South West RNM will receive \$720,000. That is certainly a significant contribution to those areas and they will do a great job. Those groups work very hard and we support them 100 per cent.

We have committed \$15 million over three years for a new trial program aimed at providing greater security for older parent carers who can no longer look after their child with a disability. That is particularly important. We all are getting older and many of us, our family and friends know people who are impacted in this way. We want to help those people at that time in their lives. We will provide \$6.5 million for fire safety upgrades to residential aged care facilities. In my electorate of Warrego, we have such facilities in Miles, Mungindi, Charleville and Roma, and they will be provided assistance through that funding.

In my electorate, the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service will receive a total budget of \$540 million. The hospitals to be supported with this funding are at Chinchilla, Glenmorgan, Jandowae, Meandarra, Miles, Moonie and Tara. Certainly, that funding will be available. I know it will be tight and there will be a lot of changes in the way that government does business. However, funding is available and it is a significant amount. In the southwest, the Roma Hospital will receive \$3 million and a further \$3.3 million will be provided to the Charleville Hospital as part of \$51.6 million worth of upgrades and improvements to 12 rural hospitals in the next 12 months. That funding will go towards upgrading essential fire and electrical safety issues and master planning for a new facility to follow in the next five to 10 years. In that area the major facilities that will be assisted by this funding will be the Augathella Multipurpose Health Centre, the Charleville Hospital, the Cunnamulla Hospital, and those at Dirranbandi, Injune, Mitchell, Morven, Mungindi, Roma, St George, Surat, Thargomindah and Wallumbilla. A lot of communities will certainly be helped through this budget.

Another very important area of funding is provided for our roads. We hear a lot about the national highways, but out my way the road that I hear the most about is the Warrego Highway. There is an enormous amount of traffic on that road at present. There is funding for it, although there is never enough. In the 2012-13 year, \$78.087 million will be spent on the national network. That does not include maintenance; that is general improvements. Other work will be carried out in the Murweh area on the Landsborough Highway. Another \$64.9 million will be put into those areas. On the state network of roads, nearly \$50 million will be spent on the Carnarvon Highway, affecting Mungindi and St George and going right through to the Castlereagh Highway. The shires of Balonne, Bulloo and Maranoa have received significant funding in relation to the state network of roads. That is particularly important and we need to ensure that funding continues. There is never enough funding for roads, but this is a damn good start. For the people who drive on those roads, I know it is frustrating to come across roadworks and traffic lights, but at the end of the day the work is being done and it is important to get the work done. I ask people to remember that the work is happening and it is very important.

The Murweh Shire Council will receive \$6.6 million for flood mitigation, which is a continuation of the levee bank at Bradley's Gully. We are really pleased that that money is coming through. That is really fantastic. Funding of \$120 million will be provided to upgrade homes in Indigenous communities across the whole of Queensland. Some money is going in there, which obviously is always needed. One of the most important things to remember about this budget is that 75 per cent of the government's capital works is being spent outside Brisbane. We are a decentralised state and it is important to understand that this funding is not going just into the capital but it is going throughout the whole of Queensland.

One of the things that we need to do in the future, and do more of, is make our railways work better. In my area I have a railway line that runs out through Charleville to Quilpie to Cunnamulla, and once you go past Dalby it is hardly used—two trains a week. We have to put more freight back on rail. We have to work harder. We have to ensure that QR National goes out there and chases business. We need to ensure

that there is encouragement to move freight off the road. That road cannot continue to take the traffic that it currently does, so we need to do a lot more to get freight off the road.

The Rural Fire Service has been in the news for the last day or so. It is important that we preserve that wonderful service that we have. I am sure that people out there understand that we have a huge fire season ahead. I would say that we are facing probably the biggest fire season since the 1950s. It is important that we have a force out there that can manage that and have the confidence to do the job.

Minister Dempsey has come forward and said that there will be a strong program there and that he will look after the Rural Fire Service, and I think that is a wonderful thing to do. We need to do that because they are the backbone of our fire services throughout regional Queensland. We will not sit by and watch our volunteer fire brigades be burnt by some of the hierarchy in the fire services.

This budget has been a wonderful turnaround, a wonderful opportunity for Queenslanders to see what an LNP government can do. I certainly look forward to next year, when we will see a lot of this money being rolled out and we will see the development that is going to occur in Queensland and the changes that that will make to people's lives, which I am sure will be much, much better in the long term.