




Speech by

John Hathaway

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (4.14 pm): I rise to speak in strong support of our Treasurer's budget for 2012-13, the first for the LNP and the first for a conservative government in Queensland for 15 years. I commend the Treasurer for his efforts and indeed the leadership team and ministers for their skill in crafting a responsible, once-in-a-generation budget that will reset the course of this state. I also acknowledge their fortitude in having to make the many tough decisions necessary to get the state back on track and back in the black. These are decisions that have not been taken lightly—decisions that, regrettably, do cause some pain. However, this is more a case of bitter medicine—necessary medicine—to cure the malignancy of Labor's addiction to debt and deficit.

For the record, I take issue with the Leader of the Opposition, herself a minister of the previous government that presided over this infection. I take issue with her reply and response, accusing this government of not caring about the people behind the numbers. In fact, three cabinet ministers of the former government sit amongst those opposite. Where is their acceptance of responsibility? Where were their voices when Bligh and Fraser kept peddling their addictive wares? I can inform the current Leader of the Opposition that it is because we care about these people—yes, it is because we care about all Queenslanders—that this budget is doing what it must to get the state back on track and back in the black.

Unfortunately, the malignancy that we inherited is not isolated in its presentation. Australian political history is replete with examples, and the symptoms are all the same. Case history 1: Kennett following Cain-Kirner. He was left with a \$2.2 billion budget deficit, a net public sector debt of about \$33 billion and a budget sector debt of \$16 billion. Does this sound familiar? He was forced to reduce the Public Service by over 50,000. He had 100,000 people protesting outside his office at parliament, and he recollects—

Although there were 100,000 outside my office at parliament that day, there were 4.5 million who stayed at home or at work.

While reviewing the protest by about 3,000 people this week in front of this place, I know that there are people hurting and I know that the government is making these tough decisions for the good of all 4½ million Queenslanders.

We have also heard today in this House secret plans of the former government to target up to 41,000 public servants. Their hypocrisy is breathtaking. The difference is, however, that our government has made those decisions with far less impact on Queenslanders. They have done this by carefully working on both sides of the balance sheet and without any increases in taxes to Queensland families.

Case history 2: Howard following Keating. I note the member for Rockhampton's recollection of his career demise some years ago through the Defence Efficiency Review defence reform agenda and his laying the blame solely on the then new Howard government. He conveniently left out the reason the defence reform was required. I will give members the reason. In fact, I can give them about 96 billion reasons. Did the sky fall in on the honourable member's head? Was he left destitute? Did he partake of the generous redundancy provisions offered by Defence? If my memory serves me, those provisions were

similar to the provisions of the Queensland government in the one-off \$800 million redundancy program as outlined by our Premier this morning.

Case history 3: O'Farrell following Keneally out of Rees and out of lemma. There is no change here, folks! The symptoms and the prognosis are the same. Regrettably for all Australians, I fear that the symptoms are clearly evident that the malignancy has gone feral at the federal level. I ask: what is the common causal factor here? It must be genetic, and its DNA code is A-L-P. Fortunately there is a cure, and it is this medicine that we take this week. The cure for these three case studies to which I referred has not changed over the last 20 years. You simply need to live within your means. Mums and dads across our state have known it for eons. You simply do not start whacking everyday household living expenses on the tick. It is not rocket science. The good people of Townsville can understand it. Why can't those opposite understand it? Speaking of those opposite, let us now review the efforts of one of their former luminaries. I refer to the previous Treasurer, who in his 2011 budget speech heralds—

This State Budget puts us right back where we belong—out in front.

By whose measure, Mr Fraser? Was it Moody's, Standard & Poor's, Fitch? He continues—

... as we rocket back to our rightful place out in front of the rest of the nation.

Why do Tasmania and South Australia enjoy better borrowing conditions than us? According to Mr Fraser, it was a budget defined by optimism and opportunity. I guess you have to be optimistic to keep putting everything on the tick. Well, Mr Fraser, Ms Bligh and those opposite, 4½ million Queenslanders did not share your optimism nor see any opportunity. In fact, they saw their opportunity on 24 March.

Our budget this week does provide optimism and opportunity for North Queenslanders. The people of Townsville will welcome many of the commitments that the Newman government has made to them, not the least of which was our commitment to reduce the cost of living. Already North Queenslanders are enjoying the benefits of a frozen tariff 11 for domestic electricity that will save them on average \$120 per year. People from Townsville are already benefiting from the freeze on car registration fees for the term of this government. New neighbours in my suburb of Hermit Park are already benefiting from a savings in stamp duties of up to \$7,175 when purchasing their principal place of residence. Townsville first home buyers of newly constructed or off-the-plan homes in my city will benefit through the creation of the first home owner construction grant of \$15,000. It will also provide a very necessary boost to our construction sector—one of our economic pillars—energising activity amongst the Townsville tradies and constructors.

Likewise, tradies and residents of Palm Island will benefit from the ongoing and joint commitment of about \$30 million for housing on Palm. Honourable members will recall that when I was speaking on the health and hospitals network bill I indicated that the Townsville hospital and health service district is the largest regional district in Queensland. Many of these patients come from isolated rural and remote communities and they will benefit from the Newman government's commitment to inject over \$97 million across the forward estimates and double the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, increasing for the first time since 1987 the accommodation component from \$30 to \$60 per night and doubling the per-kilometre rate from 15c to 30c.

Pensioners, seniors and those with a disability in Townsville will benefit from the almost half a million dollars for the ongoing funding provided to the Townsville City Council for the Townsville Home Assist Secure service. Staff, students and parents of prep students from Currajong State School welcome the long-awaited funding for the relocation of their prep facilities. Members of P&Cs from across Townsville state schools will welcome the opportunity to catch up on their sadly neglected maintenance through the \$200 million Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund. Many of the schools in my electorate are quite old and have been neglected by Labor. In fact, tomorrow I am attending the 125th foundation anniversary of the Belgian Gardens State School. The parents, the school leadership team and the staff who make up these P&Cs, many of whom I have met, are honest, hardworking and committed individuals. They will ensure that they can get best effect of the up to \$160,000 available to them. I completely reject the accusations levelled at them by the president of the QTU and was further gobsmacked at his inferences simply for political grandstanding, particularly when many of the members on these P&Cs are parent teachers and members of his union.

Catholic and independent schools of Townsville have not been forgotten, and they will be able to avail themselves of up to \$86 million of the \$115 million Building Our Future Schools Fund over the next four years. But it is not just about the bricks and mortar; it is also about the people of our schools. Only last week the Minister for Education was in Townsville awarding certificates to the nine invaluable teacher aides of Central State School. What welcome news in this budget for teacher aides with our commitment of over \$53 million across the forward estimates for teacher aides.

Both my colleagues from Mundingburra and Thuringowa have spoken on our commitment to the paediatric intensive care service and the ongoing commitment to the Townsville Hospital redevelopment and oncology centre. Likewise, all of the five LNP members across the greater city of Townsville have fought hard for the upgrades to key road infrastructure not only on the Bruce Highway to the south and north of the city but also on the provisioning of an additional \$100 million a year over the next 10 years.

The residents of Mount Louisa will welcome the realignment and upgrade of Banfield Drive, as will the businesses at the Bohle for the fixing of Blakeys Crossing.

I welcome the continued support for the redevelopment of Townsville port Berth 10. This is a key enabler for Defence, local industry and the tourism sector of Townsville. People of Townsville will benefit from our government's commitment to law and order—over the next four years 1,100 new police and \$100,000 for remote CCTVs to Townsville City Council. This will assist with their ability to detect, respond and act. This government is serious about resourcing law and order, and this will tie in nicely with the Townsville Crime Action Plan launched jointly with my colleague Sam Cox.

In closing I once again congratulate the Treasurer on his first and a once-in-a-generation LNP budget. Quite clearly he has established the blueprint for fiscal repair and set the conditions for a future for Townsville and North Queensland that will in short order remove Labor's addiction to debt and deficit. By living within our means this budget will shape our economy, energise our four pillars and position Queensland to get back on track and back in the black. It is for the people of Townsville that I endorse this budget.