



Speech by

Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard Friday, 14 September 2012

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

Mr HART (Burleigh—LNP) (6.23 pm): Turning around the Queensland economy is without doubt a momentous task, a task which the debt addicted Labor Party could simply not bring themselves to do. Instead, it took vision, determination and resolve to undertake the responsible task of fiscal repair and to bring the Queensland economy back from the brink—a brink that without corrective action of the Campbell Newman government would have seen gross debt skyrocket to \$92 billion in 2015-16 and even further still to \$100 billion by 2018-19. Quite frankly, Queenslanders and the good people of Burleigh do not need or deserve that burden.

This really is the most important budget in a generation of Queenslanders. Even though the previous Labor government was well renowned for its creativity when it came to managing the finances of this state, in the end there was simply no magic trick or magic pudding that could fix the mess it created. We as a new government have been forced to make the tough decision and we will not shrink from that responsibility.

The responsible fiscal repair of the Queensland economy and the turnaround from deficit to surplus by the Newman government is just like that popular hair product—it won't happen overnight but it will happen. When the fiscal repair begins, Queenslanders and the residents I represent in Burleigh can again look to a promising and economically sustainable future, a future that delivers on the promises of an LNP government—LNP promises which Queenslanders overwhelmingly voted for and endorsed on 24 March this year. They are the same LNP promises that will grow a strong four-pillar economy and deliver economic stability that this state has not seen in recent times—a future which will see the Newman government deliver a projected fiscal surplus of \$652 million by 2014-15. For the benefit of those opposite who do not understand basic business principles, that is when your income is more than your expenses and you end up with money in your pocket at the end of the year. It is a future where local Burleigh businesses will have the confidence to invest, where first home buyers are encouraged to buy a home, where the construction industry is welcomed, where schoolchildren have access to emerging technologies, where people have confidence in the health system, and it will be a place where we can feel safe again.

As we know, this will be the first time in nine years that the state will have a genuine budget surplus—a budget surplus that will allow the state of Queensland to again live within its means and plot a course to regaining a AAA rating. That rating is not just a bunch of meaningless letters on a piece of paper as the Labor Party would have us believe but rather a AAA rating will significantly reduce the cost of interest repayments this state has to make into the future. Regaining a AAA rating would save this state billions of dollars in unproductive interest.

The cost of having to pay high interest equates to a massive opportunity cost and an opportunity lost forever. Because of Labor's addiction to debt and paying interest instead of investing in projects that deliver better community outcomes, it means that Queenslanders and the people of Burleigh have gone without. In contrast, the Newman government will save \$1.3 billion in interest payments over the forward

estimates. That means more money to reinvest in Queensland and more investment in Burleigh. With continued savings like this, it means that the LNP government can start to bring forward critical projects in future budgets—projects that will deliver high productivity and deliver better economic, social and environmental outcomes for the community.

The LNP government has a plan for Queensland where Labor just had their fingers crossed, their eyes shut and their heads in the sand. They were hoping for the best with no real plan. The 2012-13 Newman budget will get Queensland back on track and we will deliver significant benefits for the Burleigh community. These benefits include providing better tourism opportunities; \$48,000 for capital works that will set the direction for the development and management of the David Fleay Wildlife Park and provide an agreed plan for staged development and effective infrastructure management over a five- to 10-year time frame; \$56,000 in funding for the construction of a forest aviary for display of eastern bristle birds—

Mr Bennett interjected.

Mr HART: Do you know what they are?

Mr Bennett: No.

Mr HART: As well as developing, producing and installing eight interpretive animal signs and two interpretive habitat signs. I look forward to finding out exactly what an eastern bristle bird is when that aviary is built. There will also be \$20,000 for upgrades to the mangrove boardwalk along Tallebudgera Creek, including improvements to boundary fencing and formalising access points. At present the boundary is largely unmarked. However, it is identified in some areas by ageing concrete and timber bollards, the majority of which were installed in the 1980s. The upgrade also includes improving the existing visitor access path and boardwalk from the Loman Lane car park to the entrance of the conservation park in the intertidal zone within the mangroves.

The principals and P&C presidents of the state schools in my electorate cannot get the smiles off their faces after the announcement by the honourable Minister for Education, Training and Employment of the \$200 million Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund, which will allow all schools in my electorate to apply for up to \$160,000 each to tackle those maintenance issues that were long ignored by the previous failed Labor government. I say well done to the honourable member for Surfers Paradise.

The LNP government is also committed to the success of the Commonwealth Games in 2018 and the economic and cultural opportunities the games will bring to the Gold Coast. The LNP government has approved the allocation of \$20.953 million in funding to support the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games approved by the former government. This round of funding further supports planning towards the staging of the games.

The Newman government is also dedicated to providing better access to disability services and policing in Burleigh. That is why Burleigh will receive \$10.431 million for the provision of disability services for residents in need from Palm Beach Avenue in the south to Oceanic Drive in the north of my electorate.

Burleigh will also be a major beneficiary of the Gold Coast police helicopter, with the Newman government allocating \$18 million over the next four years. With an eye in the sky, policing with take on a third dimension on the Gold Coast, enabling police to track and apprehend more offenders and in some cases deter offences from occurring in the first place. This extra police helicopter funding works in tandem with the \$1.1 million to establish the Major and Organised Crime Squad on the Gold Coast, which will also incorporate the Illegal Firearms Squad. These policing initiatives—along with \$4 million additional funding for Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers, \$100,000 to strengthen the School Based Policing and Adopt a School program and \$146.9 million over four years for 1,100 new police officers—will help answer the calls of Burleigh residents who want to feel safe in their community once again.

The Newman government is also moving to lower the cost of living. The government is delivering on this promise by providing the Gold Coast with a one-off rebate of up to \$80 per domestic water connection. This rebate will help Gold Coasters balance their budgets as the LNP government continues the task of untangling the Labor failure that is the state water grid. Do not even get me started on the failure that is the Tugun desal plant.

Mr Nicholls: Tell us about the Tugun desal plant.

Mr HART: I said, 'Don't get me started.' Finally, Burleigh will receive \$69,000 to provide significant social and recreational outcomes for the Burleigh area, including: providing crisis, transitional and long-term affordable accommodation to meet local needs in partnership with non-profit community organisations; employing a local coordinator to support seven surf sports clubs on the Gold Coast; purchasing training and playing equipment for rugby league; and conducting level 1 coaching accreditation to support future growth and coaching sessions and club activities to support kayaking and canoeing at Miami.

We have heard from the Treasurer and the Premier this week that Queensland now has a firm plan in place to go forward and that the future is starting to look far brighter. In contrast the Leader of the

Opposition, when pushed on local media this week, had no alternative plan. Even when she was asked five times, her reply indicated a constant and consistent, 'No plan.' The Leader of the Opposition had an opportunity yesterday in her budget reply speech to outline the alternative government's plan. She said—

Labor always stands for fairness. That will remain our guiding light as we develop the policies we will take to the next election.

They have no plan. The Leader of the Opposition went on to say—

That is why we would invest in a trial site in this state for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The NDIS is one of the biggest social reforms that we will ever see in our lifetime. Labor would commit the \$26 million for a trial site in our state ...

In the scheme of the state budget as a whole, \$26 million is not that much for such an important program. But the problem is that, regardless of the end cost of a proposed NDIS, those opposite would go on and commit this state to an ongoing cost that could be billions and billions of dollars. How exactly would they suggest we pay for that? Do the seven dwarfs over there get in there Tarago, nip down to the nearest Bank of China and stick the credit card in the ATM? I do not think so.

Let me just deal with that overabused credit card for a minute. The Leader of the Opposition said in her speech—and we have just heard 'Snow White' over there, the member for South Brisbane, and the shadow Treasurer parrot the same line—that 'Labor left net debt, factoring in investments and money in the bank, of \$24.92 billion.' Those economic illiterates opposite seem to think that this indicator—and that is exactly what it is: an indicator—is a real level of debt and that they can talk about it to make themselves look good.

But let us have a look at this budget book. We can see in there on page 145 that there is \$24.389 billion, and what the opposition have done is they have offset the investment that is there for the state's public servants' superannuation. If you do something like that, you really need to take into account the liability that might be there as well. What are the figures that are involved here? We have a \$34.502 billion investment, but on the other side of the page we have liabilities—a \$25.364 billion superannuation liability and \$5.602 billion of other employee entitlements. When you add those two things together, you get about \$30 billion so this \$24 billion net debt position that they keep talking about is a load of rubbish. It is an indicator. Do not be fooled by that. If the opposition had a look in this book, they would find a lot of great information for them.

Actual borrowings are \$62.672 billion this year, and the Labor spending program that was locked in before the election will see borrowing blow out by \$10 billion in the next 12 months. As members can see, those opposite just do not get it. They just do not understand basic economics. They cannot be trusted with the state's credit card and the voters on 24 March knew exactly what they were doing when they tossed them out.

All in all, I would like to congratulate the honourable the Treasurer, the honourable the Premier and the LNP cabinet for delivering a budget the people of Queensland demanded on 24 March this year. This LNP budget draws a line in the sand and ends Labor's insatiable appetite for debt. For the first time in a long time, this state has a plan—a plan to build a strong four-pillar economy—and this budget is a landmark step in taking the state from debt to surplus and bringing back confidence to invest in Queensland. We will look back in years to come and see that this was the point in time when a determined Newman government put Queensland back on track. I commend the honourable the Treasurer for his diligence in presenting these bills to the House. I have much pleasure in supporting the bills.