




Speech by

Michael Pucci

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard Friday, 14 September 2012

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

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (4.53 pm): Today It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of our government's first budget. I congratulate the Treasurer, the honourable Tim Nicholls, and his department for their efforts in the arduous task of putting together one of the toughest budgets in Queensland's history. This government was not elected to make easy decisions. Queenslanders have had enough of a government that at turn took the easy option. We were elected to make the tough decisions, to make the hard choices, to get the job done. That is what the budget achieves.

This budget forms the backbone of our government's campaign promise to establish a four-pillar economic recovery plan. At the crux of this budget is the need for the state to get our AAA credit rating back, a rating lost by the severely negligent management of the economy by the inept former Labor government. That negligence has since been paid for by families throughout Queensland. This budget sets out to help Queenslanders in the best way possible, by reducing the costs of living. Queenslanders are hurting. They hurt every time they have to dip their hands into their own pockets in order to pay their ever-rising bills. The inept legacy of the former Labor government requires action to turn our economy around and regain the economic stability that has been robbed by the now opposition. In the words of a former US president, the late Ronald Reagan—

Governments don't reduce deficits by raising taxes on the people; governments reduce deficits by controlling spending and stimulating new wealth.

One of the key elements to our election campaign was to establish a four-pillar economy. This budget lays the foundation for that work to be done. This budget is the cornerstone, placed and waiting to be refined and built upon in the coming years. Through this work our state will get back on track.

Like others from across the state, the people of Logan have faced tough times that were created by poor decisions and poor management in the bad old days of the Labor government. This budget paves a way for those times to come to an end. With a strict fiscal plan and a mature sensible approach, our mission to return Queensland's AAA credit rating will be a success. The measures to achieve that success are tough ones. They were not made lightly, but nonetheless they had to be made. It is nothing like Labor's plan. As we have heard over the past two days, if elected Labor was going to sack 41,000 Public Service workers. It is important to note that although tough decisions were made in the budget, not one permanent employee has been sacked from the Public Service as a result of the budget process. All affected public servants are being offered very generous redundancy payments. It is up to them to decide if they wish to take the redundancy package or be considered for redeployment within the Public Service. The decision to take a redundancy package is theirs and theirs alone. It is voluntary.

As a result of this budget, the cost of living will begin to reduce as much needed attention to once neglected services within our communities will finally be addressed. Australia is an active country, a sport-loving country and none more so amongst our broader national community than Queensland. I welcome upgrades to support local touch football fields in Heritage Park and the construction of flexi-pave tennis courts in Logan Village. Those projects will bolster the active community engagement within Logan. Being

active and having access to such recreational outlets stimulates not only physical health but also the community. As a result of this budget, the recreational element in our community will continue to grow. Sporting associations within my electorate are also eligible for grants that support the purchase of equipment and contribute to training. Further grants will be made available for resources within the scope of the Get in the Game policy.

The area of sporting development helps a community grow. For many, structured sporting programs are products of the local schools. All state schools in Logan will see better support for auxiliary services as a result of this budget. Each school can claim up to \$160,000 for P&Cs to fix existing maintenance flaws that have gone by the wayside due to the poor attention paid to our schools by the former government. Under the program, P&Cs will not be required to use QBuild to perform the works. They will be able to call for quotes and give the jobs to local tradies. Whether it is broken glass, peeling paint, crumbling footpaths or other various shortcomings afflicting our schools, the neglect by the former government can only be described as disgraceful. This government will put a halt to the disregard that was common practice by our predecessors. Our students—your children, my children—deserve to go to schools where the conditions are reflective of the standards our nation holds high. Our students deserve the best school facilities available. No longer will they be neglected and no longer will they be left out in the cold, as they have been for the past 20 years.

In addition to attending to the much needed repairs within our schools, the budget has set out to allocate \$4.9 million to support 150 full-time teacher aides per year for prep classes. This budget has an underlying theme: a theme of a brighter future for the next generation of Queenslanders. Personally, I believe education is an important aspect to that bright future. As a member of the Returned and Services League and a veteran of an allied nation's armed forces, I am honoured at this government's commitment to preserving the legacy of the Australian servicemen with the budget committing to \$1 million for scholarships allowing high school students the chance to attend Anzac Day ceremonies on the hallowed shores of Gallipoli. As the honourable Treasurer and so many others in this House have stated, this is a once-in-a-generation budget that not only restores our finances to proper order but also invests in the future of our state.

As our state continues to grow, Queensland's future will be reliant on a strong infrastructure network. A vital link in my electorate of Logan is the Mount Lindesay Highway. This highway, which serves as a critical arterial for commuters, such as those driving to and from schools, has been neglected by the former government. In the past 20 years, this arterial has only ever been recognised by the government of the day for political capital. Our government has recognised this failing by its predecessor and provides over \$25 million to upgrade various locations along a six-kilometre stretch that services residents in and around the Logan electorate.

As mentioned before, our government is committed to a four-pillar economic plan. We are also as strongly committed to revitalising services to our community. One of those is providing care and support services to people with disabilities. People of Logan will see a record \$4.35 million of available grants for carers of Queenslanders with a disability. Grants will be made available for community disability services to assist in accommodation services, community access, community participation and respite services. Our government is committed to support respite services for our young adults aged between 16 to 25 years. It is in supporting these front-line services that Queenslanders will receive the much needed attention they sorely deserve.

With education, sport, infrastructure and disability support services set to benefit Logan residents as a result of our budget, there are still more critical elements which the people of Logan will benefit from. The first is an area that is a burning issue within the community of Logan—community safety. This budget, in line with our election promises, has paved the way for the allocation of up to 100 police officers to be assigned within the Gold Coast and Logan regions. As a government, we take community safety for the citizens of our fair state seriously. With an overall objective of an additional 1,100 police officers state-wide and the redeployment of 200 police officers to front-line roles, steps are being taken to create a safer future for all Queenslanders.

Logan is an electorate that is interlocked with so many diverse communities that rely on key services across the region—none more so than the Logan Hospital that is a vital community asset which so many in my electorate are reliant upon. This budget sets out to support the Logan Hospital by investing \$6.7 million in 16 new beds for the community mental care unit. These initiatives are essential in providing the right care that Queenslanders deserve. It is a credit to this government that this approach to mental health services is one that is not taken lightly.

We also see the roll-out of the Mums and Bubs policy, providing help to mothers in the very important first year of their baby's life. I welcome this investment in the Logan region. With the mess that the health system was left in by those opposite, like the \$1.25 billion Health payroll system debacle, it is measures like this commitment that assures Queenslanders that this government will not abandon them. This government will not leave a mess for the next poor bloke to fix up. This government will provide better support to those in need.

This budget is not only about growth but also about fiscal responsibility. I commend this budget on its allocation of individual grants for up to \$15,000 in the reshaped first home owner construction grants for people who are buying off the plan and building new homes. This grant is in addition to the \$7,000 savings that we provided for families when buying their homes. This initiative will encourage the growth of our community. With residential growth, the possibilities for Logan are limitless. I know tradies in the Logan area welcome this news. This grant will encourage people to build a home, to start a life and to live the Queensland dream in Logan. As our community develops, the industry that is the lifeblood of such expansion will dramatically benefit. With a stimulated localised economy, our state will be well on its way to regain its financial stability.

As I mentioned before, and echoed by my parliamentary colleagues, this budget was a tough one but one that is essential for our state to rebuild itself and essential if we hope to regain our AAA credit rating. This budget is as much about today as it is about tomorrow. If the bad old days of the Bligh and Beattie Labor governments continued, Queensland's tomorrow would have been ever so bleak. Labor's reckless approach to state spending has been brought to a halt. Tomorrow now has economic possibilities for all Queenslanders. Queensland now has the chance to compose itself and work towards a healthier economy. With a firm budget and a lower cost of living, our state—our government and our people—can look forward to programs that will once again have Queensland as the leading state in our great nation.

Again, I congratulate the honourable Treasurer, the honourable Premier and the honourable members of this LNP cabinet on delivering this once-in-a-generation budget to get our state back on track. I commend the bills to the House.