




Speech by

Seath Holswich

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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

 **Mr HOLSWICH** (Pine Rivers—LNP) (11.09 am): I rise to speak in support of the appropriation bills and wish to place on record my thanks to the Treasurer, Premier and ministers of the Newman government for the hard work they have done over the past 5½ months that has enabled the Treasurer to bring down a sensible, financially responsible budget that not only starts to correct the financial mess left by the previous Labor government but also invests significantly in the future of Queensland. This budget demonstrates that the Newman government is committed to building a strong four-pillar economy. It demonstrates that we are committed to lowering the cost of living for Queensland families. It demonstrates that we are a government that is capable of delivering on our promises.

I acknowledge that this budget contains some tough measures. I acknowledge the pain that is being felt by those public servants who have lost their job and also the pain felt by their families. I acknowledge that there are community groups in my electorate that have lost funding and are now having to look at new ways to deliver their services to our community. It saddens me to see these negative impacts on people's lives, but I have to say that ultimately it would sadden me even more if our government just went forward continuing Labor's business as usual model of spending more and more, whether you have the money or not, with scant consideration to the consequences of those decisions. We need to leave those days behind us.

It is critical for our state's future that we see our AAA credit rating restored. What a disappointment it was to see yesterday that Queensland is again being downgraded from AA plus to AA as a consequence of Labor's appalling financial legacy. And yet, flying in the face of this announcement, the member for Rockhampton got up in this House yesterday and had the audacity to claim that our state does not really have a financial problem. Has he not looked at the state's finances? What part of 'unsustainable financial position' does he not understand? What part of a credit rating downgrade does he not understand? Maybe the member for Rockhampton should have a read the statement Fitch made yesterday when downgrading Queensland's credit rating. It read—

Positive rating action is unlikely in the near term given the weak fiscal balance and large debt position.

Yet the member for Rockhampton stood in this House yesterday and said there is no massive debt crisis in Queensland. So who are we to believe? Fitch went on—

The state's fiscal position and debt matrix have deteriorated over the last four years ...

And again the Fitch statement read—

As a result of historically weak budget performance combined with large capital expenditures ..., QLD's general government debt has more than doubled since FY09. Therefore, QLD's debt matrix has weakened.

Which Queensland government was presiding over this deterioration? Labor. This happened on Labor's watch. They can deny it all they want, but they were the ones kicking the football inside the house when they had been told not to. They smashed the family vase on the floor and now we have had to get the broom out and clean up their mess.

It is this continual Labor denial of the position of our state's finances that leads me to hope that the member for Rockhampton never gets his hands on the state's coffers. I look forward to his next speech in this House when I am sure he will outline for us his proof that the world is flat and that Elvis is still alive. But, by contrast, what did Fitch have to say about this Newman government budget? Fitch said—

The Stable Outlook reflects Fitch's expectations that QLD's expenditure measures announced in its Budget 2012/13 will contribute to a restoration of the state's fiscal position ... Fitch expects QLD to return to a positive operating balance in FY15.

It is critical for our state's future that we turn the annual deficits that characterised the previous Labor government into surpluses. It is critical that we as the government provide a launching pad for our state's economy to grow, and we cannot do that effectively if the fastest growing government expenditure is interest on debt. The Newman government was elected with a clear plan to get Queensland back on track, and this budget is a strong step in that direction. This budget is a good budget for my electorate of Pine Rivers, and I would like to spend the rest of this speech outlining some of the benefits of this budget for Pine Rivers.

The Advancing our Schools Maintenance Fund will plug a yawning hole in the maintenance budgets of Pine Rivers schools. I spoke to many of my local principals in the lead-up to this budget about what they were hoping for and every single one of them said that they needed more money for maintenance. Many schools for too long have not had sufficient maintenance money to fix anything but the most urgent and dangerous maintenance issues. The \$160,000 each school will receive to start addressing their maintenance backlogs will make a significant difference to the learning environment for our students in Pine Rivers.

But to my mind, nearly as significant as the funds themselves, is the fact that each school will actually be empowered to make their own decisions about how that money will be spent and who will do the work. Having worked closely with many of the P&Cs and principals in Pine Rivers, I know that each of my local schools will ensure they get maximum value out of their \$160,000. I am pleased to see that our government is getting out of the way of schools, empowering them and trusting that they know what is best for their own school.

It is also pleasing to see in the budget \$533,000 for Bray Park State High School to go towards housing the 65 year 7 students who will be starting high school as part of the year 7 high school trial next year. Bray Park High is a fantastic school, and I am pleased to see this infrastructure spending being delivered in this budget.

Disability services in my electorate have been given high priority in this budget and generally under the Newman government to date. This budget contains over \$11 million of ongoing funding for disability services. My electorate has also benefited from a previously announced \$920,000 commitment from our government to SCOPE to provide disability respite services to our community. I also look forward to the positive impact the elderly parent carers innovation trial will have in Pine Rivers.

Significant funds have also been allocated in this budget to roads and transport infrastructure in my electorate. Work will finally be completed this financial year on the repairs to the flood damage on Mount Mee Road at Ocean View and King Scrub. There is also an allocation of \$7.3 million towards the construction of a third railway track between Lawnton and Petrie stations. Pine Rivers commuters are well aware of the bottleneck between these two stations and the delays it causes to trains travelling between these stations. And, most importantly, when it comes to road infrastructure, this financial year will see the completion of the AJ Wyllie Bridge reconstruction on Gympie Road at Lawnton. The lack of timely action of the previous government to repair the AJ Wyllie Bridge after the January 2011 floods epitomised the neglect the previous Labor government showed towards the Pine Rivers community. The member for Kallangur and I are proud to have been supporting our communities through the entire bridge rebuilding process and we look forward to seeing this bridge delivered in December this year.

Pine Rivers residents will also benefit greatly from the cost-of-living relief in this historic budget. The \$80 water rebate, freezing car registrations, freezing the standard electricity tariff, halving the increases to public transport fares and restoring the stamp duty exemption on family home purchases will all have a significant impact on the budgets of Pine Rivers residents. There are significant wins for Pine Rivers businesses in this budget. The most significant of these is the delivery on our commitment to reduce payroll tax for Queensland businesses. Many Pine Rivers businesses will benefit from this year's increase in the payroll tax threshold from \$1 million to \$1.1 million. And there will be many more who benefit as this threshold is increased by a further \$100,000 every year for the following five years. Pine Rivers businesses have a lot to offer our state's economy, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with my local businesses and supporting them as they bring jobs to our region.

There are numerous other commitments in this budget that will benefit my electorate including increased police numbers, increased services for mothers and babies, and the revised first home owners construction grant. There is also \$368,000 in ongoing funding for Home Assist Secure and funding for the renewal of local social housing. This is an important budget for Pine Rivers and this is an important budget for Queensland. This budget is a turning point in this state's history and signals the start of a new era of financial responsibility and a renewed focus on front-line service delivery. I am proud to stand in this House as a member of the government delivering this budget. I commend the budget and the appropriation bills to the House.