




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE AMENDMENT AND TRADE AND INVESTMENT QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.44 am): It is indeed a pleasure to rise to support the budget today that the honourable Treasurer, the member for Clayfield, brought down. I have described it as probably the second-most important budget in a generation. Last year it was a tough budget in tough economic circumstances. We had to arrest the decline in the state's finances as advised by the incoming Treasury briefs, and the Treasurer has very adequately addressed this in the past 12 months.

Colleagues, in 2012 Queenslanders overwhelmingly voted for change. This was delivered in the 2012 budget and again in the 2013 budget which was handed down on Tuesday. After 20 years of Labor neglect and mismanagement, both budgets have demonstrated the LNP government's commitment to bring the Queensland economy back into black and return its AAA credit rating. This budget, of course, is about rebuilding Queensland, making our communities resilient and growing the economy.

As we know, most of Queensland was unfortunately again hit by a summer of natural disasters, leaving behind approximately \$2.5 billion in damages. I can assure all Queenslanders that this government remains committed to getting Queensland back on track and rebuilding after these natural disasters.

My family was also impacted by these natural disasters. My grandparents in the electorate of Bundaberg lost the entire downstairs of their home and all of their belongings. They have only recently moved back into their property. The builders are only just now getting back in to rebuild the home so that my grandparents can get their lives back on track. So I understand personally how we must ensure that as a government we build resilience in our communities; that we do not give up on these communities; and that communities maintain the faith to continue to live in these particular communities. Unlike Labor, the Newman government will not continue to use the same out-of-date practices in Queensland any more. This budget is focused on growing our economy, rebuilding these areas of Queensland, and most importantly, as I said, making our communities resilient.

Since the election we have got on with the job of making the difficult decisions needed to repair the state's finances and grow this great economy. Without these tough decisions, Queenslanders would not benefit from initiatives such as the additional \$97.7 million over four years to boost the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme, which assists patients accessing specialist medical services which are not available within their local area. They would not benefit from an additional \$10 million in the Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme to ensure that low-income householders can get an emergency payment of up to \$720 if needed.

In the 2013-14 budget, community safety will be boosted on the Sunshine Coast with a record \$2 billion allocated to the Queensland Police Service. The budget also includes an additional \$64 million for Queenslanders with a disability, their families and carers, and an investment of \$537 million in the Great Teachers = Great Results program. This budget will ensure funds are

allocated to the Sunshine Coast region's schools which need it most. It provides \$132.3 million over three years to freeze car registration fees for more than 2.5 million family vehicles, and \$917 million over three years to reinstate the principal place of residence concessional rate for stamp duty, providing a saving of up to \$7,175 when buying a home. That is just to name a few.

We have heard a lot this week about the cost-of-living pressures that Queenslanders are facing. We know all too well that families across Queensland have been struggling for years. But let us not accept the misinformation and misguided judgement of the seven members opposite. In the last year, this Newman government has concentrated on the cost-of-living pressures and put downward pressure on them right across the board. I have already mentioned the car registration freeze for a full term in government and the \$917 million to reinstate the principal place of residence, which saves the average family home \$7,175. We gave a one-off water rebate of \$80 throughout the South-East Queensland bulk water group. That was a \$92 million commitment. There was also \$158.2 million over four years to halve the public transport fare increases due in 2013-14.

In her response to the budget yesterday the opposition leader had the hide to talk about the cost of living and public transport. Let the record show that it was the opposition leader as transport minister who took to cabinet the proposition to increase cost-of-living pressures from public transport right across-the-board—year in, year out. So it is hypocritical for the opposition leader to even mention public transport in this House, considering she was in fact the minister who created additional cost pressures for all Queenslanders travelling on public transport right across the state.

In the first 12 months of government we froze the standard electricity tariff 11—a \$63 million commitment. If those opposite are serious about addressing cost-of-living pressures, they ought to pick up the phone and call the federal Treasurer, who is a Queensland, he says—he does not stick up for Queensland but he a Queensland—and tell him to cancel the carbon tax. Taking the carbon tax directly out of the budget will provide an immediate saving. By getting rid of all the green schemes, under the guise of climate change, and the renewable energy targets they will immediately provide savings of hundreds of dollars for every Queensland. But those opposite cannot do that, because they put Greens preferences ahead of reducing the cost-of-living pressures on Queensland families.

I thank all employees of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. It is one of the portfolios most burdened by legislation, with some 23 bills introduced into parliament and 20 bills debated in the past 12 months. There has been immense pressure on the Department of Justice and Attorney-General as we have started to get some common sense into legislation in the law-and-order sphere. I thank my honourable colleague the Minister for Police and Community Safety for his assistance in that regard.

Mr Stevens: And more to come.

Mr BLEIJIE: Much, much more to come. I am thanking Justice staff; I am not saying it will get easier from now on! I do thank department of justice staff because I think they have done a tremendous job over the past 12 months in getting the government's agenda through the legislative process.

We are committed to continuing the fiscal repair—a focus those opposite lost many years ago. We will rebuild the state's finances. It is vital that we deliver the better services that Queenslanders expect and deserve. Within my own department, prioritisation of resources in the 2012-13 budget has already had an impact in terms of ensuring Queenslanders have access to swift and fair justice. In the 2012-13 budget the Newman government appointed an additional Supreme Court judge, three additional magistrates and a central coroner.

As I informed honourable members on Wednesday, for the 2012-13 financial year we have already seen significant improvement in the clearance rates achieved by the courts. In 2012-13 the clearance rate for criminal cases in the Supreme Court was at 125 per cent, while civil matters were finalised at a rate of 107 per cent. That compares to the rates of 99 per cent for criminal matters and 87 per cent for civil matters during the first year of the Bligh government. This means that our courts are not just finishing on time; the backlog is finally beginning to clear. These figures demonstrate that this can-do government is committed to providing swift and fair justice for all Queenslanders.

To further demonstrate this commitment, the government has also agreed to reject the Commission of Audit recommendation to increase court fees and charges. This is in stark contrast to the federal Labor government, which recently implemented a new regime of court fees and in some instances has increased them by as much as 75 per cent. Those opposite in the Labor Party should hang their heads in shame that their mates in Canberra have no qualms about dipping into the pockets of Queenslanders as they desperately attempt to fill their budget black hole. What is happening now with federal Labor happened over the past 10 years with state Labor.

Looking to the future, I am pleased to announce that for the 2013-14 financial year the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will contribute to the government's commitments by providing \$3.1 million for the expansion of the boot camp trial to Townsville, Rockhampton and the Fraser-Sunshine Coast over the next two years to help us get crime in this state under control. To help make sure we are rebuilding our justice system we are implementing a common-sense approach to our justice system and, once and for all, are tackling the issues of youth justice. We have had over 2,000 submissions to the youth justice survey. The Queensland community is having a direct say. This will really lay the foundation for law reform in this state with respect to youth justice. We will release those findings shortly.

\$1.4 million of a \$3.5 million funding commitment over four years will be provided towards the government's justices of the peace (QCAT) pilot project, which is aimed at reducing backlogs in QCAT. This program started this week in four out of the five trial sites. We have justices of the peace sitting in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal administering justice according to law. The feedback I have received already indicates that they are doing a fantastic job. I spoke yesterday to Justice Alan Wilson, the president of QCAT, and he assures me that the trial is proceeding as planned and that the justices of the peace are doing a fantastic job. I congratulate them for that.

If this trial over the next six months is successful in the five trial sites, it is my intention to look at rolling out this program to other jurisdictions in other regions right across Queensland, where eminent community members who are justices of the peace participate in a more fulsome way in the justices of the peace program and the justice system. I remind honourable members in the year of the diamond jubilee of Her Majesty's coronation that in the days of 'Richard the Lion-Heart' justices of the peace used to be called 'keepers of the king's peace'. We are restoring a lot of those traditional roles. On a related matter, I pass on my best wishes to Prince Philip, who we understand will be in hospital for a few weeks requiring surgery.

We are also investing \$3 million to fund the recently announced racing industry commission of inquiry, which will answer questions about what happened to hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money during the former Labor government's reign. How did projects worth millions of dollars go out there in the community without appropriate tender, without appropriate procurement processes? We will get to the bottom of that with a \$3 million commission of inquiry. Honourable members will know that I have recently appointed through Executive Council the Hon. Justice Margaret White, who has just retired from the Court of Appeal, to head that inquiry beginning 1 July.

Also, a building and construction compliance branch will be established to improve productivity, reduce costs and stop unlawful industrial action which is costing Queenslanders. I am talking about the militant union behaviour on construction sites across Queensland. We will get to the bottom of it and we will stop it.

We are already heavily investing in victims-of-crime groups right across the state. I am very pleased that we will be investing additional resources in facilities. There is \$16 million to continue the expansion of the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. We will get that finished, despite the project not running on time. The former government projected that it would be done in August 2012. We will get that project completed.

I thank the honourable the Treasurer on behalf of the electorate of Kawana, which I have represented since 2009. It is great to see that the commitment to the Sunshine Coast University Hospital remains alive and well, with an additional \$115.6 million to continue construction. This project has been delayed. If we can look at better ways to deliver health services right across the state—KPMG is delivering a report on that midyear—including at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, then we have a responsibility and an obligation to do so on behalf of taxpayers. The Sunshine Coast University Hospital will remain a free public hospital, despite what members of the Labor Party are saying on the Sunshine Coast. If we can find a better way to deliver services using taxpayers' money more effectively, and people get a better service, we should look at it.

I thank all honourable ministers for the commitment they have to the Sunshine Coast. I mention Great Teachers = Great Results. I congratulate the school principals in the electorate of Kawana for the tremendous work they do in our schools. There is funding in the budget for infrastructure at our schools—flashing traffic lights at Kawana Waters State College and Talara Primary College. I thank the Minister for Transport for that.

I have two children at Meridan State College and in a couple of years my third child will be in prep. I want to make sure that what this government does now sets up the next generation, including my three children, for the future. I think this is a budget that delivers on that commitment to ensure children, just like my three beautiful young children, have a great future.

A government member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thanks to my wife for our three beautiful children, but our children will have a future because of the fiscal management—the responsible fiscal management—that this Treasurer and this government have implemented. This budget offers many things for the people of the Sunshine Coast in the electorate of Kawana and I applaud the Treasurer for his commitment to getting on with the job. This budget demonstrates our commitment to fix the state's finances and grow a stronger Queensland economy so that we remain a great state with great opportunities for all.