




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.42 pm), in reply: Mr Deputy Speaker, no-one spoke! As I said earlier this week in my budget speech, this budget rightly turns to growth, rebuilding and the resilience of people and communities. And it does. I find it remarkable that, after nearly a day and a half of full debate and after consultation, we have not yet heard from the shadow Treasurer, who traditionally stands up and speaks directly after the Leader of the Opposition at 11 o'clock on a Thursday, to put the opposition's alternative position. We have not heard from the member for South Brisbane, nor have we heard from the member for Mackay, nor have we heard from the member for Woodridge. In fact, of seven opposition members, we have heard from only two.

Last night I looked at the speaking order list. When I saw that no opposition members were willing to do the hard yards until 11.30 last night, I spoke to the Whips and said, 'What's going on?' They said, 'We've been attempting to find out whether or not they want to speak, but they are not communicating with us'. This morning, the Whips produced a list, which is there for everyone to see. It contains the names of the opposition speakers and the order in which they were going to speak and make their contributions. However, here we are now, at 2.45 in the afternoon, three days after the budget was delivered, and we have heard from only two opposition speakers: the Leader of the Opposition, who had to speak because it is provided for in the standing orders, and last night from the member for Rocky, who was not on the speaking order list but who decided he wanted to be on the speaking order list.

Today, despite our best efforts to manage the business of the House and to liaise with those opposite, they have continued to play silly games. They have played silly games all morning. A number of speaking spots were put aside for them, but each time the Deputy Speakers sought to give them the call they said no, no, no. Today, the opposition members have totally abrogated their responsibilities to their electors and their responsibilities as an opposition. I am embarrassed for them today. Despite the great tradition of the ALP—the party of fighters that we know all too well they stand for—members opposite are unable to respond to a budget speech. I have never known an opposition fail to respond to an appropriation bill, and I have been watching politics for over 25 years.

Mr Johnson: I've never seen it.

Mr NICHOLLS: The member for Gregory came into this House in 1989 and is the second longest serving member of it, but he has never seen an opposition fail to take up their slots and to work with the government in order to speak to an appropriation bill. After 48 hours of dedicated time, I have been asked only two questions. As the Premier has said, this is the most well-resourced and the laziest opposition that this state, I think indeed this country, has ever had the misfortune to be lumbered with. I am sure that the members of the ALP who are despairing at the antics of their members in Canberra will look to Queensland and say, 'There is no hope for the great party of the worker, the party that used to stand up and proudly fight.' They started that tradition in the electorate of the member for Gregory. Today, they have crumbled. What are they? They are nothing but the lapdogs, the lackeys and the servants of Clive, Katter and the union movement.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! What is your point of order?

Ms TRAD: I find those remarks offensive. I have run from a PCMC meeting that had to be rescheduled.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member—

Ms TRAD: That is outrageous behaviour. Those are outrageous statements.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have warned the member and I warn the member for South Brisbane under standing order 253A. The member has sought a withdrawal. Treasurer, perhaps it might help: I did not hear anything of any particular imputation, but the member has taken offence.

Mr NICHOLLS: I was not referring to any individual members. I was talking about the ALP. I do not know what she could take offence at, but I am happy to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Treasurer. I did not hear anything of a personal imputation in what the Treasurer said. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr NICHOLLS: We know that the House has now been sitting for a day and a half and all the normal conventions and rules in relation to establishing a speaking order to work with the government—and the government has four Whips who have been trying to get some sense around the speaking order—have been brought to now. It is not the responsibility of the government to do the opposition's job for them, although they think it is. The rules and conventions of this place—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left, the Treasurer has the call.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Palaszczuk: Using your majority.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr NICHOLLS: The rules, the conventions, the understandings of this place are well known to those of us who respect them and who have been part of them. But I smell the dark hand, I smell the evil intent of the member for South Brisbane. This smells like Trades Hall over there under the railway bridge at South Brisbane. I see the games being played—the same games that do the number crunching over there at South Brisbane. The manipulation—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr NICHOLLS: Silly university games are played over there rather than complying with the proper rules of this place. Everyone knows that you talk to the Whips and you put in place a speaking program. We had a speaking program in this place that had been agreed to, published and circulated.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a matter of privilege suddenly arising.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Treasurer is deliberately misleading the House. There was no consultation, I am advised by the Whip, about the speaking list before it was published and circulated in this House. This is a disgrace. This is about the Treasurer wanting to pack up early on a Friday afternoon and go home. That is what it is about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is exactly what this is about and it is a disgrace using your massive majority—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, that is not a point of order. I suggest that you write to the Speaker if you feel that there has been something that has not followed process. I suggest you write to the Speaker about that. Further, the lists in the House are only a guide and the Deputy Speakers work from those as a guide. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr NICHOLLS: Here is the list that was distributed to members and has been sitting on desks all day today. I see them look at it themselves. I have been—

Mr PITT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I have heard comments that this list was agreed to. I also heard comments that this is a list that the opposition has had a contribution to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! What is the point of order?

Mr PITT: I did not say 'a point of order'. I said 'a matter of privilege suddenly arising'. I will say, before the Manager of Government Business hops onto his feet, that this, as I see it, is a breach of the workings of this House. We only had a conversation not too long ago—and I am very happy to put this on the record—about how this debate would play out in good faith as part of this parliament. This is not what has happened. This is about a government avoiding scrutiny.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I now warn the Leader of the Opposition under standing order 253A and the Manager of Opposition Business under standing order 253A. At the time of the debate nobody jumped. The Treasurer jumped and was given the call. I call the Treasurer.

Ms TRAD: I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I am on the speaking list and I had been called to parliamentary duty at the PCMC.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for South Brisbane!

Government members interjected.

Ms TRAD: The PCMC is a committee of this parliament.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lockyer! I warn the member for Lockyer under standing order 253A. Member for South Brisbane, I will allow you a short explanation. If it is exactly the same thing that everybody has said then that will not be appropriate.

Ms TRAD: It is not exactly the same thing, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am on the speaking list and I attended a parliamentary committee meeting where I had duties to perform as a member of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there anything more than that?

Ms TRAD: I am being denied my right to contribute to this debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for South Brisbane, you shall resume your seat!

Ms TRAD: This is an outrage!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Under standing order 253A, the member for South Brisbane shall leave the parliament for one hour as she had already been warned and she ignored directions and guidance from the chair. I call the Treasurer.

Whereupon the honourable member for South Brisbane withdrew from the chamber at 2.55 pm.

Mr NICHOLLS: As I was saying, the list has been circulated and been in front of people. I am happy to table the list. I sat in the House as a courtesy to the opposition as is the normal procedure. Normally in these circumstances the shadow Treasury spokesperson would speak in the House, but I understand that there are other duties so I give some forbearance for that. When we look at the list we see Albert, Kawana, Mermaid Beach, Caloundra, Mulgrave—no show—on the list. There is Hinchinbrook, Waterford, Whitsunday, Mackay—no show—on the list. There is Townsville, Capalaba, Bundamba—no show—on the list. Then there is South Brisbane—no show—on the list.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections. The Treasurer is simply explaining the facts according to the list. He is not taking interjections.

Mr MULHERIN: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Treasurer is reading out all the crossbenchers and opposition members who are on the list. I respectfully ask that he also include the government members who have been disenfranchised by this arrogant government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will take his seat. That is not a point of order. I call the Treasurer.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am quite happy to table that list.

Tabled paper: Speaking list for the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill, Appropriation Bill, and Revenue Amendment and Trade and Investment Queensland Bill [\[2874\]](#).

The other matter quite clearly is that the rules and conventions of this place are quite clear. When a speaker sits down then the floor is clear and the next person to stand in their place is entitled to the call as determined by the Speaker. I quite clearly remember the member for Lockyer sitting down in his place. I then quite clearly remember no-one standing. The member for Woodridge is here. I have just seen a speech being waved around by the member for Woodridge but she did not jump. It is not the job of the government to say to the opposition, 'Do you want to stand up and speak now?' The rules of this place—and the member for Woodridge has been in this place—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections.

Mrs SCOTT: I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising. I was here. I have some courtesy for people on the speaking list. It was not my time to speak. I was here with my speech and it was not my time to speak. There were still several members on the government side yet to speak.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Woodridge has raised a matter of privilege and has finished. I call the Treasurer. I wonder if we might be able to move to the Treasurer's summary of the budget debate. That would help the House.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am looking forward to doing that. Let me just point out the inconsistency of the argument. First of all we have had the member for South Brisbane and the member for Mulgrave saying that they should not have to comply with the list then we have had the member for Woodridge just say that she was complying with the list. They either do or do not understand the rules.

We all remember the instances when this side of the House was on that side of the House and we consistently ensured that we had people ready to jump to speak. The reality is that the standing orders take precedence over everything else. The standing orders in this place provide that, in the absence of anyone standing, a person stands and the Speaker gives the call.

We have now had, I think, about seven matters of privilege suddenly arising. Oh, if they had been here during the entire three hours they would have been able to deliver their speeches instead of protesting too loudly now. They have been caught out. They have been caught short. They have been caught abrogating their duty to the people of Queensland.

Mrs SCOTT: I rise on a matter of privilege suddenly arising, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Is it a different one, member for Woodridge, from the one before?

Mrs SCOTT: I have been here in this House all of the morning and all of the afternoon. I have had my speech written. I was at the breakfast this morning. There is no way you can accuse me of not attending to my parliamentary duties.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Woodridge. I call the Treasurer.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is too much interjection. The Treasurer is summing up the budget, as is the right of a Treasurer. I call the Treasurer.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The reality is this: they had a little plan. They had a little plan. They were playing with the rules and the standing orders of this place. They failed to take proper steps to protect the integrity of their position as the opposition and they have been caught out, and now they are protesting too loudly. They are protesting so much because they are embarrassed because of their failure.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has the call.

Mr NICHOLLS: The reality is that the people of Queensland have been poorly served by an opposition that has failed in its primary duty to scrutinise the appropriation bills of the government.

Let me touch now on some of the contributions from those members who did manage to find their way to the green chamber in Parliament House here in George Street in Queensland. I said in a speech earlier this week that this budget rightly turns to growth, rebuilding and resilience of people and communities, and it does. I want to thank those honourable members who did make a contribution, certainly from the government side, for their contribution. I want to recognise the efforts those members make to ensure that they represent their communities and that their communities know what this government is doing for them across this state as part of our program for rebuilding, resilience and growth. On Tuesday I said—

Last year we took the steps necessary to improve our finances. I said that my hope was that no Queensland Government would need to undertake a repair task of such magnitude again ... This Budget locks in those gains. It makes good on our

promise to deliver frontline services. It is not a frivolous or fanciful Budget. It does the hard yards up the middle that Queenslanders need to get their State's finances sorted out.

The Government will continue to be upfront about the challenges we face and take the community with us on the choices we need to make. The one thing we won't do is kick the can down the road for our children to solve our problems.

This government is committed to ensuring Queensland is a great state with great opportunities.

When I rose in this place on 11 September last year we could not foresee the damage and destruction brought by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. There is no doubt that, with a repair bill of \$2.5 billion and reconstruction expenditure of \$9.3 billion in 2013-14, we have been knocked off course. The disasters affected numerous communities. Those disasters and the effects of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald will not be forgotten, as communities rebuild and return to a sense of normality, however limited, and the Newman government stands ready to assist. Whether it is local disaster coordinators or the funding to local government to repair damaged roads and community infrastructure, the Newman government is there assisting with the rebuilding.

I said on Tuesday that 'betterment' was unfinished business for the Newman government. Regardless of who is in Canberra or, for that matter, who is in government in Queensland, betterment makes sense. This budget puts a downpayment on betterment, but we do need to do more in the future.

On the revenue side, I outlined the details of the fall in revenue that this government has been subjected to. Much has been said about the accuracy of the revenue forecasts and economic forecasts. The budget is impacted by many factors that are outside the control of this government, and we acknowledge that in the budget documents. Queensland Treasury and the officers of Queensland Treasury make the best estimates they can in what is a very complex environment influenced by conditions, exchange rates, commodity prices and consumer confidence.

Taking the resources sector as an example, the outlook deteriorated fairly quickly in the first half of 2012. For example, as recently as December 2011, the QRC in their publication *Queensland Resources Council: Queensland resource sector state growth outlook study* were forecasting coal production of almost 500 million tonnes in 2016 and most pundits were suggesting coking coal would continue to be well over \$200 a tonne. That was in the June and August 2012 Consensus Economics publications. Queensland Treasury's forecast for coal volumes are consistently much less than industry projections and prices are comparable to Consensus Economics forecasts of the same vintage.

In terms of other budgets, we might do well to look at the Commonwealth Treasury. In their 2013-14 budget, they revised taxation receipts down by \$58 billion, excluding GST, since the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, and that was due to parameter variations—and that is equivalent to 4.2 per cent of total revenue. In Queensland we have written down our revenues significantly by about a half of what the Commonwealth wrote their revenues down. We expect—and we saw yesterday in South Australia—that other states will also be writing down their revenues.

Turning to growth, despite what the pessimists opposite say and those naysayers of the Queensland economy in the ALP, the KAP, the PUP/UAP and all the other PPPs around the place, our best forecast based on the information that we have available today is that we will grow at an average of four per cent over the next four years, and this stands in sharp contrast to the 2.75 per cent in 2013-14 that is expected at a national level.

Jobs are the lifeblood of any economy, and the government will foster employment growth of 2.25 per cent in 2013-14 based on these sorts of numbers. That will rise over the forward years to 2015-16. Queensland has the third lowest unemployment rate—at 5.7 per cent trend and 5.5 per cent seasonally adjusted—of any Australian state. We have lower unemployment than South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. Under Labor, Queensland had the highest unemployment rate on mainland Australia. Since the LNP was elected in March 2012, total employment has increased by 11,700 in trend terms. Trend employment in Queensland has grown for the last seven consecutive months.

The Queensland economy remains strong and is growing. What those opposite and in the union movement do not seem to understand is the difference between the state's finances and the state's economy. It is the state's finances that are ill, not the economy. But they come into this place day after day talking down the economy. Nothing we have heard from those opposite—from those opposite we have heard from—provides an alternative for the people of Queensland.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I listened quietly and politely to the opposition leader for 32 minutes yesterday and there was not one policy suggestion. There was not one suggestion about reducing costs. There was not one suggestion about how to improve services or how to continue to cope with the rising tide, waters and head winds of the downturn on the global economic front with other economies going

backwards. There was only a litany of whinges, complaints and blather. What we do know is what the ALP did when they were last in government. That is the record that they need to be judged by, not by some feel-good, sound-good phrases that are sprouted here for half an hour on a Thursday morning.

Those opposite are the party of no position, no new policies, no savings measures, no economic policy, no plan to get the AAA credit rating back, no plan to pay down the debt and no regret for the position that they have left Queensland in. The contribution of those members on the crossbenches has been nothing short of appalling—again, no new ideas and one cannot help but wonder what those members said last year. So let me remind honourable members. We had the sterling contribution from the member for Yeerongpilly, the rat in the ranks, who turned up and spoke for a grand total of five minutes and, to my way of thinking, barely mentioned his own electorate. What did he say last year in contrast to what he said this year? Last year he said—

This is the most important budget in a generation. The budget builds a brighter future for Queensland. Queensland once had a low and stable debt. The budget breaks the addiction to years of debt and deficit and starts Queensland on a path to regaining the AAA credit rating.

It was exactly the right thing last year. He went on to state—

Our fiscal repair effort ensures the government is able to deliver cost-of-living relief to families and invest in local schools, hospitals and roads while still keeping our debt and deficit under control.

He goes on to state—

In essence, this is the most important budget in a generation. It builds a brighter future for all Queenslanders, especially those requiring disability services.

He then commended the bills to the House. What did Dr Douglas, the genius from Gaven, turn out apart from one of his usual forays into the realms of obscurity and lunacy when he started talking about the budget of 1927, as if Queensland was in the midst of a great financial depression. One almost thinks that the member for Gaven, the leader of PUP or UAP, or whatever it is, would actually wish a depression on the people of Queensland. God help his patients. He probably wishes a disease on them so that he can prescribe a pill. What did the member for Gaven say last year? He said—

The Treasurer and Premier have every right to blame Labor for the need to retrench staff and cut programs because their job is to restore confidence. They showed that they listened recently and reduced the cuts by 6,000—

we have actually done better than that in this budget—

and funded those saved positions via real savings ... Trust, equity, delivery and shared responsibility—these are the messages of this budget.

That is what the member for Gaven said last year. Let us talk about the member for Condamine. He did not get the job as the lead Senate ticket for KAP. He was punted way out west where the rain don't fall. It is going to be plenty of years of drought for the member for Condamine, I would suggest, in Katter's Australian Party—or Katter's country music party. We will see them on the music channel on Fox. This is what the member for Condamine said—

For years, many schools within my electorate battled with QBuild. I am being honest about that. I can remember, as president of the P&C of Cooranga North State School for many years, trying to build a covered walkway from the toilets to the school ... The Treasurer and this government has opened up our schools so that they can use private contractors and save millions.

He also said, 'It is simply commendable that he is turning around the health department ...' When talking about mining royalties he said, 'That increase in royalties is locked in and it is a great plan.' When talking about the freeze on car registration he said—

What a wonderful gift from a Queensland government. This is exciting stuff.

What else did he say about his electorate? He said, 'My electorate has certainly done very well.' It has certainly done very poorly since he changed sides, I would have to say, because they do not see much of him there. He is out moving duck eggs around or shipping cattle into the member for Nanango's electorate. He is doing anything rather than representing those voters who sadly elected him to this place. He also said—

I am very proud to stand in this chamber and speak to the first budget delivered by a government of which I am a part.

Not for too much longer and he did not tell anyone, either.

I am finally in a position where I can lobby ministers and get something done.

That was the member for Condamine. He would not need to look in the mirror: he has two faces already.

In the time left I want to talk about some of the remaining budget initiatives so that people do understand. The budget initiatives invest in key front-line services. The education budget will increase by \$707 million. The disability services budget is up \$64 million. The Health budget is up \$533 million.

The law and order budget is up \$129 million. The housing services budget is up \$24 million. We have allocated resources for police. We have allocated resources to the Geological Survey. Seventy-five per cent of the government's capital expenditure will take place outside Brisbane. We are putting in \$868 million over the period to 2018-19 to address the historical underfunding under Labor of disability services in Queensland and to support the implementation of the NDIS in Queensland.

We have put \$537 million into Great Teachers = Great Results. We are putting 257 new police officers into the force on top of the 300 that we appointed in 2012. We are putting another \$100 million into fixing our schools, bringing the total additional funding under this government to \$300 million over three years. We are providing an additional \$147 million over four years as part of a \$327 million program to address the health maintenance backlog. This government is providing increased funding of \$83 million over four years to support and enable better access to rural healthcare services for Queenslanders in regional, rural and remote communities, and we will provide increased funding of \$28 million over four years for additional Hospital in the Home services to be provided by the private sector.

There are a number of claims that were made in relation to the budget by the Leader of the Opposition in her very modest contribution on Thursday morning. She talked about tough decisions being made by the Labor Party. She said that Labor's tough decisions during the GFC saved Queensland from recession. Every other state in Australia went through exactly the same GFC, yet the situation in Queensland got so bad that our credit rating was downgraded and assets had to be sold without telling the people of Queensland that they were going to do so, and it did not improve the situation. Labor's actions in the GFC only made Queensland's position that much worse. She said that Labor remains committed to returning the AAA credit rating, but when they had it in their Q2 plan and they found out that they lost their AAA credit rating they rewrote the Q2 plan and left the AAA credit rating out of that document.

By the member for Mulgrave's own admission, they have no plan and no policies on how to regain the AAA credit rating. We recall his nonanswers to Chris O'Brien on the ABC news, to Steve Austin and to Tim Cox on ABC Radio. He said, 'No, as an opposition we do not need to provide an alternative. Don't tell me that I must provide an alternative.' He is being true to his word. He is not providing an alternative.

When it comes to the terms of this budget, when it comes to what it delivers for the people of Queensland, when it comes to locking in the changes that have been made in order to fix our economy and our state finances, this budget delivers. It does take the hard yards up the middle. I want to thank the Treasury staff who have worked so hard over the past months to put this budget together. They have done a sterling job. I want to thank my colleagues on the CBRC: the Deputy Premier, the Premier, for a period of time the Attorney-General and the Minister for Agriculture, who has made such a sterling contribution. I want to thank all my ministerial colleagues for their work over the last nine months since the last budget who have contributed to the magnificent result that sees expenses growth the lowest it has ever been since accrual accounting was introduced in 1998-99 and below the decade-long average under Labor that saw expenses increase by nine per cent year on year and saw the deficit and debts continue to bloom and blossom.

I particularly want to thank my office staff: my chief of staff, Gerard Benedet, and my senior advisers, Matt Jeffries, Kirk Stubbs, Fiona Simmons and Rob Whelan, without whom this budget would not have been put together and delivered as assuredly and as successfully as it has been. I want to thank our administration staff, Jasmine Smits and Stephanie Fairly. Without putting too fine a word on it, I pay great thanks to my EA, Kim McInnes, who does a fantastic job not only in organising me but also in organising me for all the members whom I visit and work with over a period of time. Without her, truly nothing would get done. I acknowledge Under Treasurer Helen Gluer and Deputy Under Treasurer Alex Beavers. I make particular mention of Peter Johnson, who had responsibility for collating and coordinating the entire budget preparation over the last six months. He has done a tremendous job.

As I said on Tuesday, now is not the time to waiver or change course. This budget continues the journey of ensuring Queensland is a great state with great opportunity. I commend the budget to the House.