




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

APPROPRIATION BILLS: FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (5.29 pm): First, I thank the committee for the opportunity to answer questions. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I, too, enjoy estimates. It is the only time the opposition actually ask me a question, so why wouldn't I? Not that that infrequency has actually improved the questions in any way, shape or form, but at least it is an opportunity to have a kick-out, even if it is a pretty one-sided operation.

The Newman government's budget this year—the second budget we have delivered—continues down the path of fiscal repair. It continues to implement the four fundamental fiscal principles that we have undertaken to follow in order to fix the mess that we were left by the Labor government. Unlike those opposite, we do not change our fiscal principles when the going gets tough. We stick to the principles and we continue to make the decisions that are necessary in order to deliver them, because they are the right thing for Queensland and the right thing for Queenslanders.

Unlike the previous Treasurer, who, when it got too tough, decided to change his principles, we stick to our principles and we continue to make decisions. As a result, we have delivered the lowest increase in government expenditure since accrual accounting was introduced in 1998-99—something that Labor in office was never able to do. We have managed to contain the increase in employee expenses to the lowest level since 1998-99—something that Labor was never able to do. And we have plotted a path back to a fiscal surplus—something that Labor was unable to do for half a decade.

This is a budget that focuses on growth, rebuilding and resilience and that continues to deliver increased funds in vital areas for vital services. We increased funding by \$707 million for the education department. We increased funding by \$64 million for disability services. We increased funding by \$533 million for health. While I am on the topic of the Health budget, I heard the Manager of Opposition Business continue today with the deceit that this government has cut the Health budget. Today we again confirm that it was increased by \$533 million—an additional \$533 million. Only in the warped world of Labor politics does an increase of \$533 million add up to a decrease. That is how the member for Mulgrave would do his sums. And of course we have \$868 million for DisabilityCare Australia that those opposite voted against. They voted against the single biggest reform to disability care in Australia—bigger than the Labor government was able to deliver in its entire term in office. This is a budget for the times and a budget that makes the right decisions, even though some of decisions are tough, that delivers on fiscal consolidation and that provides additional funding for all the services Queenslanders want at a price they are prepared to pay.

I saw some comments in the statement of reservations by the Manager of Opposition Business in relation to growth. In respect of growth, I inform him that the March quarter Queensland annual gross state product growth was 3.6 per cent. In comparison, the rest of Australia gross product rose 2.4 per cent. So you can see that Queensland continues to outperform.

The opposition Treasury spokesman made claims about the unemployment rate in Queensland but failed to mention that unemployment under Andrew Fraser and Anna Bligh went from 3.7 per cent

in September 2007 to 5.5 per cent in March 2012—an enormous increase of 1.8 per cent. In our term, the unemployment rate has gone up by 0.5 per cent—much less than 1.8 per cent under their stewardship and much less than the whole of Australia under Kevin Rudd and Labor, which has gone up 0.6 per cent. In terms of full-time employment, what they failed to say is that under Labor in 2009 full-time employment actually fell by 0.9 per cent, despite their promise to create 100,000 breadwinners jobs.

In terms of debt, the member for Mulgrave made comments about the increase in net debt of \$7.8 billion. What he failed to say is that under Labor it would have been \$10.8 billion. We are \$3 billion better off as a result. In terms of accountability, he proceeded to make claims in relation to me but failed to mention the trips to Gina Rinehart on the \$350 million *The World* ship. Hypocrisy, thy name is ALP.

(Time expired)