




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 5 June 2014

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (12.03 am): With the indulgence of my colleagues I will take a moment to reflect on Queensland Day, 6 June. Some 27 years ago, it was a proud day for me and my wife to be married on this day. It is a very happy day. I am glad I stayed up to share that with you.

Over the last three years I have travelled from one end of my electorate to the other having regular meetings and I have heard loud and clear that people wanted this government to deal with the waste and to stop taxpayers' money being wasted. I always take these many opportunities to remind Queenslanders of the facts that were the state's finances just two short years ago—the unsustainable debt position and debt levels being at unprecedented levels. Most Queenslanders acknowledge the Labor government's \$80 billion worth of debt and certainly understand the ramifications of paying \$4 billion every year in debt interest. I also take the opportunity to challenge anyone to provide one policy solution or one idea from either Labor or the minor parties that does not involve more spending and debt. Labor had no plan to repair the budget when it was in government. Labor has no plan now. It offers no alternatives, just rhetoric and scaremongering.

If any electorate was going to be critical of this budget, I thought it would have been the Burnett electorate. So it is with great pleasure that I can report strong support for this third strong budget under this state LNP government. The community is happy that we are on track to deliver an operating surplus of \$188 million in 2014-15. The community is happy that we will deliver a fiscal surplus in 2015-16, the first time in a decade. A little known fact is that all major projects are now reviewed to prevent the all-too familiar waste and irresponsible spending sprees that existed under the previous Labor government. At the 2012 election we promised to get the budget under control and grow the economy, and that is exactly what we are doing. There is no doubt this budget is the strongest and smartest budget to date and it keeps our promises to get Queensland back on track. Governments, like households and businesses, must live within their means—something that the people in my electorate now understand as a result of the Strong Choices campaign.

This budget commits to the funding and implementation of the Carmody inquiry, dealing with the important and difficult issues of child safety. The Burnett electorate welcomes the budget investment for those in the community needing support with social inclusion and disability services. With my electorate still in the grips of drought, I welcome the investment in drought assistance including fodder and water subsidies, fee and rent relief and community and mental health support programs. With the wonders of the southern Great Barrier Reef being in the Burnett electorate like Lady Elliot and Lady Musgrave islands and the many reefs, I welcome the funding for reef protection of a further \$11 million for 2014-15, bringing total reef protection funding to \$55 million over the next five years.

We continue to deliver on our election promises, and we will. We promised to deliver 1,100 new police officers. This budget sees funding for 267 new police officers as we deliver our promises. The significant and important initiative of the Safe Night Out Strategy needs to receive investment to deal

with alcohol and drug related violence in entertainment precincts. My community welcomes this commitment. My region is particularly pleased with the investment in education. Principals and school communities are now empowered to decide on their funding allocations. We acknowledge that every school is unique and we acknowledge the importance of the Great Results Guarantee. The funding to remove the maintenance backlog now ensures that students and teachers have the facilities they expect and they deserve.

I take great pleasure in talking about the Health budget that will increase by six per cent. We on this side of the House have introduced strong reforms and understand that improvements are not always about spending more money but about results. Since we were elected the number of category 1 patients waiting more than 30 days has been cut by 83 per cent. The number of category 2 patients waiting more than 90 days has been cut by 69 per cent. There has been a 19 per cent reduction in the average time for an ambulance dispatch and the number of long wait dental patients has been reduced by 98.5 per cent. Locally, I congratulate all of the health service delivery professionals and the local health boards. I make special note of the work done by staff in the Agnes Water-Discovery Coast primary health care services. We welcome the announcement that we have been successful in receiving funding for a new ambulance station in Miriam Vale. Thanks Terence Shelly and staff and the community for supporting the call for this legacy project to be delivered.

This budget delivers on every one of my commitments to the people of Burnett. This LNP government understands that well planned infrastructure delivered in a timely manner is vital for our economy and facilitates service delivery to regional Queensland and provides long-term employment and opportunities for training and development. Jobs are sorely needed in the Burnett. Unemployment is our single biggest issue. I welcome the continued strong record in growing the state's four-pillar economy, particularly over the last two years. In construction the government has simplified planning processes and reformed assistance for homebuyers, and dwelling approvals are up by 35 per cent. The resources sector has seen significant reforms to drive investment. Tourism is booming. Locally we have had tremendous results with visitor expenditure. The support for our local tourism enterprises has intensified with access to national parks, ecotourism expansion, money in this budget for the Mon Repos Visitor Centre revitalisation and more funding for the important tourism events. Regional tourism organisations can continue to support the regional communities that rely heavily on tourism.

We welcome the many reforms in agriculture. Vegetation management in particular has given farmers more control over land management that boosts production. On-farm productivity and riparian recovery on affected farms as a result of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald are funded in the budget. Employment gives people the ability to pay their own way and provide for their families. The people of this great state should be able to depend on their elected representatives, but this does not mean that we should be building a nation of dependence.

The significant work that has been achieved already in my electorate on road infrastructure continues, with major investments to ensure that we have the roads that we all need. After years of neglect my constituents are happy that this government is finally showing respect to regional Queensland. Another project that was never going to be delivered under the previous government is the major boat ramp at Fairymead. This project was promised for years. I take every opportunity to advocate on behalf of the people of the Burnett electorate. Support for this budget and the benefits it will deliver for the region will be no different. I support the progress of the bills through the House.