




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 30 April 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Comments by Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, Apology

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (12.45 pm): On 3 and 4 April this year I made statements in the House to the effect that the Newman LNP government did not deliver a surplus when in government and that, by contrast, the Palaszczuk Labor government had delivered four in a row. In making these statements I principally relied on the statements made and issued by treasurers who have served in that position since 2012, particularly the member for Clayfield.

In his first budget the member for Clayfield announced a deficit of \$10.768 billion and predicted a return to surplus in 2014-15. In his speech and commentary he exclusively referred to fiscal deficit and fiscal surplus. In his second budget the member for Clayfield delayed the promised return to fiscal surplus to the 2015-16 financial year. In his third budget the member for Clayfield repeated that fiscal surplus would be achieved in 2015-16, and in that budget he also predicted a return to an operating surplus in 2014-15. To the best of my analysis this was the first time the then treasurer mentioned the concept of operating surplus in the budget speech.

I also note that subsequently on 18 December 2014 the then treasurer released the 2014-15 Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, or MYFER. In the MYFER document itself, the promised operating surplus for 2014-15 was revised into an operating deficit of \$64 million. The then treasurer's media release for MYFER did not include any reference to the operating surplus or operating deficit, repeating the delayed promise of fiscal surplus for 2015-16. In any case, given that the parliament was dissolved on 6 January 2015 the then treasurer's commission was terminated before he had the opportunity to deliver any result for 2014-15 or 2015-16.

I also note that for each of the budgets produced under the Palaszczuk Labor government our government has used the measure of operating surplus in budget speeches and media statements. By that measure, we have delivered surpluses for all of the budgets we have delivered. I have at all times relied on the descriptions applied by treasurers serving at the time of the budget, which I believe is fair and appropriate. However, I note that the member for Clayfield has since changed his approach to measuring surpluses and now wishes to adopt the operating surplus concept used by our government and most other governments. The member for Clayfield, relying on more recent budget papers produced by the Palaszczuk Labor government, has stated that the Newman LNP government delivered a surplus in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

I believe the reason for this retrospective change is a result of changed political priorities. In particular, when he was the treasurer the member for Clayfield sought to justify significant cuts to expenditure and staffing. Were he to admit an operating surplus when he was the treasurer he would have risked undermining the then LNP government's political message that their cuts and austerity measures were unavoidable. Having lost government as a result of these cuts and austerity measures,

it now appears the member for Clayfield and the LNP are seeking to rewrite their own record, adopting a measure of operating surplus which the member for Clayfield mentioned in only one of his three budget speeches. Even when he mentioned the concept of an operating surplus in a budget speech it was to make a promise for a financial year that he did not complete: 2014-15. Having reviewed the matter, it is apparent that the LNP government by its own admission of its preferred measure of fiscal balance never delivered a surplus.

I also reject the claim that the LNP government was responsible for the 2014-15 budget outcome, as that outcome was subject to policy changes initiated by the incoming Palaszczuk Labor government. This included decisions in my then Health portfolio to make significant savings by cutting the wait time gimmick, advertising and consultants. However, I can clarify that the Newman LNP government did deliver an operating surplus in 2013-14, and it was according to a measure that they did not like and rarely used. I regret relying on the words and statements of the former treasurer and member for Clayfield. As I am always happy to do, to the extent that I have inadvertently or unintentionally misled the House, I apologise.