



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (4.20 pm): Last year I referred to the budget as the sale of the century, as a result of the Premier sneakily announcing to the trusting public that she was going to sell Queensland out from under them. I must have been right because here we are a year later and my office, like those of other honourable members across Queensland, is being bombarded with angry voters wishing the Premier a 'happy Anna-versary'. But their messages are not friendly. Rather, they are accompanied by terse, unflattering comments.

I wonder how those opposite who all support these asset sales are responding to these concerned people? Do they admit that they sold them out at the last election? Do they admit that they were re-elected by stealth and default? I bet they do not. It is up to us on this side of the House to make sure all Queenslanders know that it was Labor who betrayed them. It is up to us to restore honesty and integrity to this parliament before Queenslanders forget what it is.

Strangely, we have not seen the Premier put her hand on her heart and pronounce 'You can count on me' much lately. Perhaps she knows that only a minority of Queenslanders have any faith in her, her Labor government, her flimsy promises. This budget is another monument to incompetence, to Labor's addiction to debt and to Labor's indifference to the burden this places on taxpayers in the immediate future.

Taxes are up eight per cent, prices for electricity and water are up, and government owned corporations' income is up through price rises, flowing on to a 50 per cent increase in their dividend and income tax equivalents to \$1.46 billion. General government debt will rise by 50 per cent in 2010-11 to \$23.38 billion, climbing to \$38 billion in 2013-14, by which time interest expenses will represent a \$2.34 billion burden to the state's capacity to service the public's needs.

As is clear from the inexorable rise in general government debt year after year, at about \$3.5 billion each year through the forward projections, Labor has no plan to retire the debt or indeed any capacity to do so as the comparable year-over-year increase in revenue is about an average \$1.1 billion. That is, of course, unless Labor sells more GOCs or increases taxes or cuts services or all three.

Does the careful observer note a trend here? Could Labor take action to reduce general government expenses—up seven per cent—when the rest of Australia, at least in the private sector, has done so? Could Labor take to heart the suggestion made on page 147 of Budget Paper No. 2 relating to GOCs? It states—

Overall though, the rates of returns on assets and equity remain well below private sector equivalent levels, representing an opportunity cost to taxpayers. This highlights the need for ongoing reform and operational improvement.

Then there was the pathetic attempt by the Treasurer, the 'economic dunce' as the Leader of the Opposition called him, to dupe us into believing that all is well because the debt that Labor in part created was coming down marginally.

Having delivered four straight budget deficits in a row, this government is now burdening the state with a record \$84 billion debt—a debt of \$18,000 for every man, woman and child; a debt that will encumber future generations. To add further insult, the Treasurer is unable to inform Queenslanders of the true cost of the AAA credit rating that we lost under this Labor government. The 2010-11 budget fails to deliver a debt repayment strategy which will make it even more difficult than ever to regain our once-prized rating. Even our poor neglected cousins New South Wales have managed to hang on to theirs.

The shadow Treasurer quoted this morning that the direct cost of the loss of this AAA rating would be in the vicinity of \$200 million per year. The Premier's promise to create 100,000 full-time jobs was always looking hollow, and her reluctance to protect jobs in regional Queensland through her silence on the federal government's super tax on mining shows that she is not serious about creating and saving jobs.

Worst of all, though, this budget will be remembered as the one that fast-tracks the government's sneaky plan to sell off \$15 billion of our assets in its disgraceful and unpopular fire sale privatisation agenda. Why should Queenslanders believe a word this Bligh government says when it cannot even pay its nurses, doctors and other invaluable health workers?

A boost to the Health budget will not restore the faith of these workers, some of whom have already left the system in disgust at their treatment at the hands of this Labor mob. It is the last straw for a number of these dedicated workers whom the Minister for Health told to drink more coffee to stay awake for the long and punishing shifts expected of them in this sick and underresourced system, long neglected by Labor.

In allocating \$4 million to fix the Health payroll debacle of its own making, the Treasurer shows either his ignorance or his arrogance with regard to this poorly managed and avoidable disaster. As consultants say, it will take countless millions more and still may never be fixed using this system. About 100 consultants and public servants are said to have been called in to fix this problem. Amongst this number is a mix of consultants and senior public servants of the level AO6 and above. If one takes into consideration that the basic pay for a consultant is around \$700 a day—anything between that and \$1,700—then \$4 million is going to run out very quickly.

Increasing living costs will not be eased for struggling families by the government's 45c a week from this budget as it will be gobbled up quickly by increased electricity, water and registration costs.

I move now to my electorate of Currumbin. As of 31 March 2010 there were 495 one-, two- and three-bedroom households in government managed social rental housing within in Currumbin area. The budget brought down by the Treasurer allocates \$3.19 million for more public housing in the form of 17 one-bedroom apartments at Tugun. Only six car parks have been provided which seems too few. Parking is at a premium as this is a small suburban street which will be impacted upon heavily if adequate spaces are not allocated.

There is still a site vacant at a prime location on the Gold Coast Highway which in February 2007 I was told by then minister for housing, Mr Schwarten, \$1.4 million was spent purchasing. Now, over three years later, with an average wait of eight years for public housing in my electorate, there is not even a foundation in sight. So much for then Minister Schwarten's commitment to provide housing for the poor in my electorate.

A number of schools in my electorate will receive substantial funding for projects in this budget. The Currumbin State School will receive almost half a million dollars to contribute to the general learning area renewal. Palm Beach Currumbin State High School will receive two amounts—one for accommodation and the other for a cookery and hospitality trade training centre as well as a science laboratory renewal. Elanora State School receives further funding of a million dollars for a new kindergarten.

I note that there is no provision for funding for any antibullying education or training in the education budget. The events of the last few years have proved that bullying is an enormous growing issue in our schools—one that cannot continue to be ignored by the state government. I wish to advise the House that I will be launching a recognised antibullying program called Walk in My Shoes to be run later this month in the two high schools in my electorate of Currumbin.

I am happy to put my money where my mouth is to support the government's Say No to Bullying campaign—a campaign that might sound strong on paper but needs action and funds if it is to have any real effect. I do hope that it will at least be able to match the dollars I put forward as well as those of the community.

During last year's budget the inexperienced Minister for Infrastructure was crowing like a barnyard rooster about his department's achievements, claiming that the Tugun desalination plant was a successfully completed project. As I stand here today we have more defects undergoing repair, and still the government will not take over the plant and commission it fully. What is it afraid of? Have the costs blown out so much it cannot admit the amount? Is this what the minister counts as a winning sign of his government's competence in managing infrastructure? If it is, then he gets an F for fail. Just what is going

on? Is the minister going to mothball it indefinitely? I asked the minister on 25 May if he was closing the plant for six months as per the rumours, but to date I have only had an acknowledgement that he has received the question despite my request for an urgent reply. Residents in affected suburbs are still shattered by the aftermath of the construction of this project. But forget about the desal plant: this government cannot even fix unsightly broken noise barrier panels on the Tugun bypass. The minister brags about this showpiece—this showpiece that cost \$545 million, another massive cost blow-out—yet he has not bothered to replace countless shattered panels for almost two years now and either cannot or will not tell us what it will cost to replace them or what material has been chosen for the job. He rants and raves like a delusional village idiot here in the House yet cannot fix the most basic of things.

Last year's budget contained \$1.5 million as a result of a desperate attempt to win the surfing vote at the 2009 election. This was for fixing Kirra, a world-renowned surfing break. Half or more of this money has already been spent and no long-term strategy has been put in place. Here we have another sign that both the minister and her government have not a clue. They just played another trick on trusting voters. A refusal to reveal what is in the bilateral state contract would indicate there is something to hide. Are those opposite protecting Labor mates in New South Wales from penalties for breaches?

Over the next couple of years a huge residential development of more than 5,000 dwellings will be built at Cobaki located literally on the New South Wales and Queensland border, prompting the call for an interchange to prevent traffic pouring down Boyd Street in Tugun which is where the desalination plant resides. A request for this revealed yet another false promise by Labor, as the government instructed Main Roads to inform stakeholders that there were no plans at all for this much needed infrastructure—yet in plans in 2002 one was clearly there. The Premier has exhibited her preferred approach: stealth followed by the surprise attack—do not tell Queenslanders the truth and then spring it on them.

With five million visitors through our Gold Coast Airport each year, this government simply cannot ignore the need to fast-track rail from Varsity to Coolangatta. One station every 11 years is telling of its hopeless capacity to build infrastructure to meet growth. The M1, which was built under a coalition government, is in dire need of an upgrade. Kevin Rudd robbed us of funds for the Nerang to Tugun section, which is so typical of Labor—promise one thing and do another. It is in its DNA. All that the southern Gold Coast will get is four kilometres or so from Nerang to Worongary. In yet another instance of a crippled and tired government, it is worrying to learn there is no committed funding for rail to Coolangatta. Mind you, at the rate of one station in 11 years, it would take over 40 years to get to Coolangatta under this Labor government! Tracking through previous budgets, the last known funding for the extension of the rail was \$6 million to be spent on planning from Varsity to Tallebudgera back in 2007-08, but nothing can be built as the necessary infrastructure and widening of the M1 is required first.

The Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary was included in the 2009 Weller report and residents are keen to learn the outcome of the recommendations. The new state-of-the-art wildlife hospital is highly successful but is bleeding costs to the tune of \$600,000 every year. In a display of utter contempt for heritage and environmental protection, this government refuses to assist this unique sanctuary in any way, starving it of much needed funds. The Blair Athol crisis accommodation centre is a lifesaver for many homeless people on the Gold Coast. Located at Bilinga opposite the airport, this facility turned away over 6,600 men, women and children—that is 550 people every month—in the last 12 months. Manager Liz Fritz tells me that the biggest increase in service demand has been from families trying to hold on to their accommodation in spite of higher housing costs and/or reduction in employment opportunities. Blair Athol continues to struggle with the limited staffing resource it has and is most deserving of decent funding.

Given the violent assaults and tragic deaths that have occurred in Coolangatta due to alcohol-fuelled violence, I would have expected some funding from the government. Cross-border issues flag the need for new legislation along the lines of a cross-border justice act that has been flagged for South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. In addition, Queensland must streamline special constable training. Mounting pressures and dangers are faced by our police, and this Labor government could not give a toss. How many of the additional 203 police officers in this budget will be allocated to the Gold Coast district? What will happen to the One Punch Can Kill campaign when the \$400,000 allocated in the budget stops next year?

Sergeant Leon Staines of the Gold Coast Traffic Branch expresses his concerns in an article about the dire state of the Queensland Police Service's resources. Unfortunately, our front-line police are the butt of the nation when it comes to equipment, lagging behind neighbouring states for critical technology and safety equipment upgrades such as in-car computing systems and emergency distress buttons. Police have indicated that they are unhappy that inaccurate staffing numbers are being peddled and that actual numbers were not reported in question on notice No. 240 this year. The figures just do not add up. There is a discrepancy of about 25 police. Was the minister misleading? He should do the sums and check if he has made a mistake and correct these figures.

In the remainder of my speech I will comment on my shadow portfolio of public works and information and communication technology. The Department of Public Works will spend some \$3.3 billion in the 2010-11 budget and employ 7,627 staff. All of these considerable resources perform a key role by working with other government agencies in assisting them to deliver their services to the people of Queensland. However, this statement does not demonstrate the quality and value of its work through comparison with private sector businesses which offer, in many cases, comparable services with the performance of other states' instrumentalities, and nor does its client departments have the opportunity to source their work to competing private business. This arrangement does not provide an environment which focuses effort on quality, price and service delivery.

CITEC characterises both the doubtful competence of its work, in particular in terms of hospital payrolls, and its belief that neither it nor its minister will be held accountable. There is no comment on this payroll disaster in the Service Delivery Statement—an appalling indictment on this government. The comment referred to earlier in my address about the need for reform and improvement in performance would apply particularly to a department that exists solely because of its monopoly in servicing tied departments or because stand-alone government entities have been formed that have no capacity to stand alone. The minister was very keen to boast in the House on Tuesday that 'even before the budget Public Works is delivering \$8.5 billion worth of building infrastructure'. He continues—

This government is able to deliver these current jobs because it has stuck to its economic plan.

Understandably he would not want to mention the massive cost blow-outs caused by CorpTech. Treasury flicked this inept agency over to Public Works in mid-2008 and the minister did not bother to check it out. The fact CorpTech has accrued a cost burn of \$400 million between 2004 and 2008 should have set off alarm bells, but the minister either was not interested or ignored these warnings. CorpTech is increasing employee expenses and user charges by collecting funds from other agencies, yet it cannot even deliver a whole-of-government HR and payroll strategy.

I note the inclusion in this year's budget of \$15 million over three years for an ICT investment fund. Industry stakeholders say they are pleased to see this funding initiative and hope it will prove to be fruitful with regard to providing whole-of-government innovations that will reduce costs and also be efficient.

Considering the mishaps of the past 12 months with the safe handling of materials containing asbestos, I would have thought significant funds would have been secured by the minister for more education and monitoring procedures. Sadly, these are missing. Of significant concern is the lack of transparency and deliberate confusion from this government, which has once again changed the terminology used in the budget papers. Apart from a lack of consistency, these changes remove familiar concepts such as 'outputs' and 'performance measures' that are readily accepted terms and replaces them with 'services' and 'service standards' which do not so clearly define their topic. But I guess that is the idea—make it darned hard to decipher the labyrinth that would expose the truth to the general public that it is not performing and it is not producing projects on time and on budget for Queensland, despite statements to the contrary.

This minister presides over a portfolio that dispenses billions of dollars worth of Commonwealth funds under the BER. Probes from the LNP about misuse of these funds have now been supported by scathing reports on national ABC television and in leading newspapers, which have exposed this program as one that is racked by massive waste.

It is little wonder that some refer to the Department of Public Works as the 'Department for Public Waste'. As the minister likes to talk up this government's green credentials I will, on this occasion, agree with him on one point: this is the greenest budget that this department has ever seen. You could call it a recycled budget, as most of this spending is simply reannounced from last year's budget. As honourable members would see, most sections of this portfolio's Service Delivery Statements require investigation as they reveal numerous shortcomings and underspends—things such as new government office buildings in Maroochydore supposed to have \$53 million spent on them. Instead, only \$39 million was spent. The money that was provided to complete the Boggo Road precinct redevelopment in 2009-10 was \$23 million. Yet this year's budget has \$6.4 million allocated. The Zillmere Joint Contact Centre, the new government office building at Mareeba, the installation of power generators at Edward Street, Brisbane, are all further examples. This is not new money being announced; it is recycled money.

The people of Queensland cannot trust this Labor government to manage this state's economy. Instead of investing money in much needed projects, the government is having to pay for all of these losses due in large part to its incompetence and poor management.