



Speech by  
**Glen Elmes**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

Hansard Friday, 6 June 2008

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## **APPROPRIATION BILLS; REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr ELMES** (Noosa—Lib) (2.48 pm): This week is the week of the Treasurer's first budget and of course for him it is a momentous one. This budget is what the Treasurer will be measured against in the future and, from the look of things, the Treasurer is trying to set the bar very low. It would appear that he is not trying very hard at all. While Queensland families face tough economic times, massive stock market losses, skyrocketing oil prices and the increased cost of living pressures, the Queensland government will continue to enjoy rosy economic times for many years to come according to this budget.

The Treasurer is wearing his rose-coloured glasses and is waltzing us down the debt spiral to every Queenslander's detriment. The legacy of the Treasurer will be signing Queensland up to a massive debt burden without a plan to pay it off. He is reliant upon the good economic times to continue unabated. Heaven help the Treasurer and the people of Queensland if the resources boom bubble ever bursts.

In fact, if we look closely at Budget Paper No. 2, the tough times for investment returns simply did not occur when the Treasurer calculated the underlying surplus. The Treasurer is simply kidding himself and he is trying to con the people of Queensland. What makes this even worse is that, in calculating the forward positioning of Queensland when accounting for investment returns, the Treasurer is ignoring reality; instead he chooses to keep his head in the sand.

If the Treasurer tried to apply his economic standards to a home loan borrower in Queensland, he would be laughed out of the bank because he has not shown a plan on how to repay the capital borrowings. The Treasurer's plan only covers meeting interest payments and he wants to leave repaying the capital to future generations. Imagine if mum and dad public went to their local public bank and said that they would pay the interest on their home loan but they had decided that their kids would pay back the capital. The bank would not give them any money. There is no way any lender would give them a brass razoo, yet the Treasurer has signed Queensland up for a massive borrowing spree without a plan to repay anything but the interest.

I wonder if the Treasurer has spoken to Kevin Rudd about this, because according to Kevin Rudd we need to be thinking about that looming day when the mining boom will end, but here in this House the Treasurer reckons it will go on forever. The Treasurer should have a chat with the Prime Minister and make sure that they are both singing from the same song sheet about the lifetime of the mining boom.

This budget is seriously flawed. The Premier called it an A-plus budget for 'A-plus' Andrew. Unfortunately for her, it is an F for fail from 'F-minus' Fraser. If the government reckons he wants to argue the point, maybe he should come to Noosa and take it up with my constituents, most of whom have been left high and dry by this budget. Noosa's mums and dads, schoolkids, grandparents, our families, our fishermen and our homeowners have nothing to thank the Treasurer for under this budget.

The sum total for the Noosa electorate is \$1.1 million for an ambulance station in Coolool that is almost complete. Some money is going to be spent some time on a road between 2020 and 2026. There is some money for an electricity generator in Cooroy which is not quite in the Noosa electorate at the moment and an amenities block for the Coolool State High School. For those items, I thank the Treasurer on behalf

of the people of the Noosa electorate. However, I would like to mention the matters that I have previously raised with the government and things that have been omitted from this budget.

First is the matter of the levels of operational police in the Noosa electorate. This is a matter that is close to my heart. It is very important to the people in my electorate, and I can understand why the minister for police and corrective services continues with the line that there are enough police in Noosa. The police officers we have are doing a magnificent job, but they are being let down and they are being completely forsaken by this government. It is not good enough that people can simply walk out of a watch-house because there are not enough police assigned to guard them, yet this is what happened in my electorate recently. It is not good enough that there can be near riots of out-of-control youths who threaten the public and Noosa's police officers, yet the police minister says that I am beating the matter up. The police minister can say what she likes, but I have residents in my electorate who are on the verge of serious illness from fear of violence and antisocial behaviour, and I have to address one of those instances this coming Tuesday.

I welcome the addition of 200 officers to the Queensland Police Service, but how many of these new officers are going to fill the gaps of officers who have left out of exasperation and frustration over the way this government treats them? As the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated I think yesterday in this place, 200 new officers will not even cover the attrition of officers who have left the service. A total of 269 police officers left the Queensland Police Service in the first nine months of this financial year alone. It is not good enough—not good enough at all—and my message is that Noosa needs more police.

Secondly, the Premier and Treasurer have tried to style themselves as being the builders of Queensland. Apparently they are congestion busters. I say 'apparently' because according to this budget there is no congestion outside Brisbane. Between Noosa and the Bruce Highway there are three roads—the Cooroy-Noosa Road, Eumundi-Noosa Road and Yandina-Coolum Road. These three roads carry all the traffic in and out of Noosa to the Bruce Highway and all of these roads are single-lane carriageways and in desperate need of an upgrade. I have been advised that the government will consider which roads should be upgraded to four lanes by the end of this calendar year. I look forward to that occurring because, as I and many other locals experienced this week, all three roads were cut due to the major rainfalls that we had.

There is a second issue in relation to roads in my electorate, and that is on the Eumundi-Noosa Road at the North Maroochy River crossing. This bridge is too narrow and it should be widened to allow pedestrians and bikers to use the bridge safely. I have asked for funding under the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program and have asked for other possible avenues to be investigated so that the residents and, more importantly, the children who attend Eumundi State School can cross in safety. I have written to the Department of Main Roads and the Department of Infrastructure and Planning about this matter on numerous occasions.

I first contacted the minister for main roads's office on 15 November 2006 and was advised to make a formal submission, which I did. Subsequently I wrote to the regional Main Roads office on 21 March and on 1 June 2007 asking for the bridge to be assessed, for the 60-kilometre speed signs to be shifted away from the bridge to increase safety and for funding to be put aside to improve the situation properly. Since that time, I have also written to the minister for transport on 13 June 2007, 13 February 2008 and 12 May of this year. I asked Minister Mickel for funding under the Cycle Network Program to improve the safety of cyclists who use the bridge. Unfortunately, this matter has been overlooked in the budget. It seems that, if the Premier wants to get rid of congestion and make Queensland roads safer, her attention ends at the Pine River.

The third issue I have raised previously with the government is in relation to the Coolum Fire Station. The current facility has well outlasted its usefulness, and I have raised this issue previously in the House. I wrote to Minister Roberts about this issue on a number of occasions, most recently on 12 May 2008. Unfortunately, this matter has also been neglected despite a site being available and the funds being allocated for other new and refurbished fire stations across the state. I can only wonder as to why this project was not considered. The land set aside for the Coolum Fire Station is on the same site as the Coolum Ambulance Station, which is nearing completion. That in itself raises an interesting question, because to go with the completion of the Coolum Ambulance Station is an allocation of something in the region of \$18,000 for murals and statues. I could understand \$18,000 being spent on a building if it were built in the CBD and it was 10 or 20 storeys high, but to spend \$18,000 on murals and statues on a suburban ambulance station that has cane land on three sides and suburban houses on the other side of the road seems to me to be a complete and total waste of money. A good coat of paint and some landscaping is the way to go. If one was to put another \$2,000 to that \$18,000, we could have another ambulance in this station with a defibrillator in the back of it and going some way to saving the life of someone in need.

If anyone wants to know why Queensland hospitals are in meltdown and why Queensland Health is in some form of crisis, then they should look no further than the dental clinic in Noosa. I wrote to Minister Robertson on 12 May this year in relation to levels of staff at the Noosa dental clinic. The reason this is an

issue is that people who made appointments in January 2001 are being seen now, some seven years after they made an appointment to have some work done with regard to oral health. It is probably a good thing that the Bligh government took the shadow minister for health's advice to fluoridate our water, because otherwise the Queensland government may never, ever be in a position to provide some dental services to some of the people in the Noosa electorate.

I would also like to turn now to examine the budget approaches and the rhetoric we hear in this place in relation to the environment and sustainability. If the government is to be measured by its words, then it has set the standard high. Unfortunately for the government, it is its actions, not its words, by which it will be measured. I turn firstly to the feed-in tariff under the Clean Energy Act for electricity generated by solar panels installed on houses across Queensland. This legislation was guillotined through this parliament—in fact, only three speeches were made in this parliament in the last sitting when the bill was brought before the House. Most of us who wanted to speak were refused the opportunity to debate the bill and its provisions, and now I can see why Labor did not want us to examine the bill in detail. The idea is a fraud. It is a con job on the people of Queensland. Those opposite know that they can prey on the good intentions of Queenslanders to help with the fight to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Again we see that this Labor government in Queensland is all talk and no action. We know all the flowery language that those opposite engage in when they employ 367 spin doctors to pull the wool over the public's eyes every single day. When it comes to action, when it comes to putting their money where their mouth is, the budget is silent. It is full of rhetoric and spin but empty on actually putting aside money to reward people who take up solar power. Those opposite claim to offer 44c per kilowatt hour payable for energy generated by people who go to the cost and effort of installing solar panels. But the fact is, as demonstrated by this budget, that the government does not ever expect to pay real money to people.

The Minister for Mines and Energy should come clean and admit that the Clean Energy Bill was never intended to put cash in the pockets of Queenslanders who have done the right thing. My office was contacted by people whom the government had consulted with before the bill's introduction. They told me that they were promised a gross payment for energy generated under this system rather than a net calculation.

Now we know why the Premier misled Queenslanders. That is because neither the Premier nor the Treasurer want to pay one red cent to people to reward them for taking up solar power. These people were angry when they found out that the Premier had misled them about it. I know that they are going to be very angry when it turns out that the government has no intention of paying anything to anyone under this program. Under a Springborg-led government we will pay the gross amount to householders who go to the trouble of getting solar panels. We will look after the people who choose to make a difference.

This budget is also a blow for tourism operators in my electorate. Given that the tourism industry is so vital to Queensland's future, one would expect that this budget would recognise their efforts and look to secure their position in the future. Regrettably, it does neither. In fact this budget kicks the industry while it is down.

In conclusion, can I thank the Treasurer for the meagre scraps he has seen fit to allow Noosa to have from the budget. As I said at the start of my presentation this afternoon, my report card and score on him was correct—F for fail from 'F-minus' Fraser.