



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (4.15 pm): This budget balances a reasonable tax take with high-quality service provision. Queenslanders will pay on average \$1,927 in state taxes per person—15 per cent less than the average of other states. Their money will fund a 24 per cent increase in health spending, a \$10.1 billion infrastructure program and the latest instalment in the 186 per cent boost in disability services funding which has been delivered since the Beattie government was elected in 1998.

John Kenneth Galbraith famously described politics as the art of choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable. The challenge in Queensland politics is to choose which services must be delivered, to collect the minimum amount of tax necessary to deliver those services, and then to justify those priorities to the people whose money we are spending. The National Party opposition members have failed to meet this challenge. In standing in this place over the past two days and arguing that they will deliver lower taxes and more services and infrastructure, this hillbilly opposition has deliberately chosen the disastrous.

In his budget reply yesterday—a reply he had not even bothered to write ahead of time—the Leader of the Opposition argued that the state tax take was too high, despite the fact that it has fallen from 4.56 per cent of gross state product under the Borbidge government to 4.3 per cent this year and will fall to 4.1 per cent of gross state product by 2009-10. Mr Springborg said that land and payroll tax should have been reduced sooner, but he went on to argue for more funding for DPI, for health and for infrastructure. Indeed, not content to stop at just funding more state services, he thought that he would have the money to even weigh into Commonwealth responsibilities. So he offered up, apropos of nothing, that he might even fund the Ipswich Motorway—a position that has been directly contradicted in his comments to the *Courier-Mail* on 14 November last year by his colleague the Leader of the Liberal Party. What economic illiteracy!

The headline story of this budget is a \$10.1 billion infrastructure package. The next story is education. The budget provides a new \$1 billion package to improve the physical environment for schools. It also provides for 426 new teachers to get the prep year up and running this next year.

A good education system is the one thing that can make a difference in the chances in life for Queenslanders. What better example of the need for education reform could there possibly be than the Queensland opposition? The documents prepared by the opposition around this budget are an embarrassing example of illiteracy and appalling numeracy. They put together an education document titled *Labor's failing the three Rs*. What does the document say? Under year 3 numeracy, it says quite rightly that the Queensland government's target was to achieve a 90 per cent pass rate. It also says, quite rightly, that the actual target achieved was 91.4 per cent. What does that say to honourable members?

Mr Terry Sullivan: They passed. They reached their goal.

Ms NOLAN: It certainly suggests to we numerate types over here that that would constitute a pass. But, no. What does the opposition have to say? Labor failed. I can understand that you do not do percentages until about grade 5 at primary school, but I would still have expected this opposition, the best resourced opposition in Queensland's history—

Mr Terry Sullivan: But the laziest.

Ms NOLAN: But the laziest—to understand that when we are aiming for 90 and we pick up 91.4 that constitutes a pass. So then I had a look at the document the opposition has entitled *The Beattie Budget Sting* or, cheekily, ‘Budget Paper No. 4’. How did the opposition score for literacy? Let us take a squiz at this. It states—

In the year just gone, Labor raked in \$400 million more in state taxes than they had budgeted for.

I did a bit of primary school grammar. The words ‘than they had budgeted for’ sound to me an awful lot like a hanging preposition. Let us look at the spelling. There are two spelling errors in this document, which the opposition has not even bothered to proofread before sending off to the printer. There is this—

Because Labor has failed to build for our future, they will no increase their borrowings.

Of course, there is a spelling error there, but that is also a sentence that begins with a conjunction. The opposition is more progressive than we might have thought. While the traditional rules of grammar might have been that one did not start a sentence with a conjunction, a more modern understanding suggests that in some circumstances it is okay. So we can give the opposition some credit for being progressive. At least that is what I thought until I read the Leader of the Opposition’s budget reply.

He talked about education and he had two cunning plans to fix things up. His first suggestion was that people were confused by the documents put out by the education department and so he had a cunning strategy to simplify them. His second suggestion was a hoary old chestnut: to bring back the cane. His government is going to indemnify teachers who might abuse or harm children from any damage they might cause. So what are they going to do? They are going to make it easy and bring back the cane. This is the kind of analysis that we get from this opposition. This is the kind of dumbed down incompetence that we have come to expect.

This is an excellent budget. It is a visionary budget. It is a budget in which the numbers add up and the sentences make sense. I expect that that is the least we can achieve and, indeed, we have delivered much more. But even that is far more than we can get from this opposition.