

11 February 2010

# Main Committee

## APPROPRIATION BILL

### (NO. 3 & NO. 4) 2009-2010

#### Second Reading

**Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (11:40 AM)** — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in support of [Appropriation Bill \(No. 3\) 2009-2010](#) and [Appropriation Bill \(No. 4\) 2009-2010](#). I would like to turn my attention to some of the commentary that has emerged from those on the other side, particularly since the election of the new Leader of the Opposition towards the end of last year. We have heard a fairly consistent theme coming forward from those on the other side, that this government, the Rudd government, is a do-nothing government. Frankly, nothing could be further from the truth. I find it ironic that the very issue of action, whether we do something or do nothing, happens to be a centrepiece of attack from those opposite at the very time that they are mounting a rearguard action against taking action on climate change. For those to come forward, to say, 'You've failed to deliver your election commitments,' but to do everything—fight tooth and nail—to block the delivery of those election commitments is absolute hypocrisy.

We are not a do-nothing government, far from it. We are a government that has achieved so much in such a short period of time. In fact, I would like to take the opportunity today to run through some of the achievements of the Rudd government in my electorate. Recently it was drawn to my attention, in fact by a member of the Liberal Party in my local community, that there is a website still active that is [www.jackiekelly.net](http://www.jackiekelly.net). This website continues to be active. It says Jackie Kelly MP (1996-2007) as if it speaks as some sort of political obituary for the time in the office that my predecessor spent. When I had a look at the list of achievements that are put forward on this one page, of what was purported to have been achieved in 11 years, I am prepared to come forward in this place and make a comparison of the things that the Rudd government has achieved for the members of my electorate, the people of Lindsay, in just over two years compared to what is purported to have been achieved over the entire 11 years of my predecessor.

I want to begin with one point—that is, the former member for Lindsay says one of her proudest moments was ensuring that the Badgerys Creek airport would not be built. It was not until this government took the decision just before Christmas to formally walk away from Badgerys Creek as an airport site that that decision had been taken by any government of the Commonwealth.

It is fraudulent to suggest that that was not the case. So to hold up as the proudest moment, the proudest achievement, something that was not achieved and something that it took a Labor government, the Rudd Labor government, to do is simply fraudulent.

And just to expose how dishonest that particular comment is, I want to have a look at some comments that have been made recently in response to the Rudd government's decision to abandon the Badgerys Creek airport site. So if you take on board what the former member for Lindsay says—that is, this issue was dealt with definitively by the previous government—then you would not think that you would still have spokespeople from those on the other side out there continuing to advocate the benefits of a Badgerys Creek airport site. But I see that on 17 December 2009 on radio station 2SM the shadow minister for transport and the Leader of the National Party, the Hon. Warren Truss, said that it was disappointing that Badgerys Creek will no longer be the site for Sydney's second airport. He said:

Now that's disappointing because there was a detailed study done at the time and it—

that is, Badgerys Creek—

was the only practical site for a second airport in Sydney.

So even beyond the political existence of the former member for Lindsay, we have those on the other side continuing to stand by their commitment to an airport at Badgerys Creek. This is a government that has taken action, contrary to the suggestions from those on the other side, and delivered the final nail in the coffin of the Badgerys Creek airport. It took a Labor government—it took the Rudd Labor government—to do that. So I have dispatched the first and the proudest purported achievement of my predecessor.

I look at some of the other things that are listed as great achievements and I see 'delivering a 900-hectare park on the ADI site'. It is true that the Howard government did deliver that outcome, after a several-year community led campaign against its original proposal, which was to allow housing on that site in areas that had been heritage listed by the Commonwealth. It was a community led campaign. The council, of which I was a member and the mayor for much of that period, led a concerted campaign to which finally, weeks before the 2001 election, the Howard government conceded; it ended up agreeing to do what was merely meeting their own obligations under the heritage legislation as it then existed.

The third of the proudest achievements is 'securing \$10 million in federal funding to upgrade Panthers Stadium'. I congratulate the former member for what was achieved there, and that is a legitimate commitment that stands as a part of her record. But I go on and see the other listed achievements, which include '\$132.5 million to improve the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment'. Not a cent of that money was spent. It was an election commitment made in the dying days of my predecessor's term in office. To claim it as something that was delivered is dishonest.

The list continues with '\$169 million for Penrith City Council infrastructure'. I can only imagine that that is the financial assistance grants that were made, because there was never anything specific provided to the Penrith City Council by the Howard government—certainly not in the nine years that I was on the council. Next on the list is '\$18 million for a medical school at UWS'. That was a great achievement for Western Sydney, after a community led campaign. That particular facility, as important as it is to Western Sydney, is located on the Campbelltown campus.

Next is '\$4 million for capital works at Penrith High'. If I were to go through and list, school by school, the millions of dollars that the Rudd government has invested in our schools, I would not be able to do that within the 20 minutes allotted to me. Frankly, if after 11 years, on your list of about 10 achievements, you come up with \$4 million that you gave to one school, that shows just what an absence of investment in schools there was from the former government.

The list goes on with '\$4 million for an indoor sport facility at UWS Werrington'. What this document does not say is that that money was provided as compensation to ameliorate the impacts that the move towards voluntary student unionism was going to have on the University of Western Sydney. So it was not even a fresh injection of funds; it was compensation for a policy that had harmed the University of Western Sydney.

I could go on and reflect on the comments of my predecessor where she said that no-one in her electorate went to university or wanted to go to university, where she took on the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney and said that she would 'cut her off at the knees' and where she failed to stand up for our local community when it came to the funding cuts that the University of Western Sydney was dealt. But that is the record. It is not correctly reflected in that one-page website that now stands there.

I want to contrast this with what has been achieved by our government, the Rudd government. In education there has been an education revolution. We do not merely identify \$4 million that we contributed to one school in 11 years; we can go through the many millions of dollars worth of investment in our local schools. I hear those on the other side suggest that the computers in schools commitment, the digital education revolution, is not being delivered. We said that we would move towards achieving a one-to-one computer-to-student ratio by 2011 for all students between years 9 and 12. It is going to happen, and we are already well and truly on our way to achieving that.

In my electorate alone, most of the schools that received funding received it in the first round, because, up until the digital education revolution implemented by this government, the schools had a ratio of one computer to eight or more students. That was the legacy that was left behind by the former government, and now they stand up—we can only imagine knowing the dishonesty behind their statements—and say, 'You're only at one to two.' Well, we are at one to two and, in the same way as in two years we took it from one to eight or more to one to two, we will finish the job and deliver one to one. That will be the biggest contribution to delivering a digital education revolution in our schools.

Let us look at trades training centres. The former member for Lindsay spoke about trades training day after day for many years and delivered nothing. We have two significant investments in my local community. We have two trades training centres. One is for the government schools—the primary site being Kingswood High—and another one for the Catholic school cluster at McCarthy Catholic College, Emu Plains. These are great investments that will provide additional training opportunities to local students in their local community and, in doing so, assist us to take on the challenge of the skills shortage.

Then we have the Education Investment Fund. At the last budget we had \$40 million for a Climate Change and Energy Research Centre at the University Western Sydney. It is not just about investing in our universities but about investing in those areas of study and research that are going to provide practical benefits to our community and indeed right across the globe into the future.

We also have the Better Universities Renewal Funding. Those opposite had left our universities in a

state of neglect—and it is no wonder when my predecessor, the former member for Lindsay, said that no-one in her electorate wanted to go to university. That is a lie. I come to this place to stand up for those parents and those students who demand access to educational opportunity—whether it be in trades training centres or at universities. For someone who was elected to represent people to come into this place and to go around the community and suggest that people should be denied that opportunity was scandalous. In my view, that is a centrepiece of the true legacy that was left behind by the former government. As a result of the Better Universities Renewal Funding, the University of Western Sydney received an additional \$16 million.

We also have the My School website. We heard so many platitudes from those opposition about performance testing, transparency and accountability but, when push came to shove, they did nothing. You could accept that and you could move on—I would be happy to do that, but I am not going to do that when I come into this place and hear those on the other side get up and say that we are do-nothing government. They did nothing; we are doing something. It is a pretty simple equation, and the sooner they get their heads around that, the sooner we will have an honest debate about the future direction of this country.

Dr Jensen interjecting—

Mr BRADBURY —I hear the member for Tangney and his interjection. I remember hearing forlorn interjections of that sort from those now in the opposition when we were in opposition—trying to pretend that somehow if you say something often enough people will believe it. The Australian public is a little bit brighter than that. You should think about the points you make and ensure that they are points that actually do have some resonance with the Australian community.

Let us look at health. We have heard much about the appalling record of the now opposition leader when he was the health minister. If you want to stick your hand up for the top job in this country, people are going to have a look at your record—it is not unreasonable. And the member for Warringah's record is woeful. Let us have a look at his time in managing what is one of the most significant portfolio areas. He cut a billion dollars from our public hospitals, he froze the number of GP training places and he ignored the need for more nurses, despite a shortage of 6,000 nurses across the country. So why should the Australian people believe that Mr Do-Nothing as the minister for health has all of a sudden become Mr Action Man who is going to do something?

Frankly, we have more runs on the board on health than those on the other side were able to clock up in 11 years. In my electorate there has been an almost \$100 million investment in the redevelopment of the Nepean hospital. I read out the list of the finest achievements of my predecessor over 11 years, and I did not hear one item of investment in capital expenditure for the big hospital in our community. They just walked away and neglected our health system. We are making real investments. Not only have we committed \$96 million towards redeveloping Nepean hospital; we have committed another \$17 million towards developing a clinical research school, which will help ensure that we have the skills to deliver healthcare services in our community. So we see once again, inaction for 11 years and lots of action in the last two—and we will keep doing that into the future.

I want to speak about housing affordability. When the former government was in place, it was the states who were the evil ogres in the housing affordability debate. So what did they do about it? Nothing. They said the best thing you can do is manage the economy well—and they did, or so they tell us. And then, with interest rate rise after interest rate rise, housing started to become even less affordable. But it was all the states' fault! Interest rate rises will happen on occasion. But when

you go to an election and say you will keep interest rates at record lows—as they did in 2004—you are being deliberately dishonest. That sort of dishonesty comes back to bite you, and I think it did bite them at the last election. In my local community we have delivered \$4 million to Delfin Lend Lease for a road upgrade which will deliver a discount of \$20,000 on land sales for 250 homes in that release area. We have a national rental affordability scheme which has delivered 194 units of housing in the Lindsay electorate.

And then, of course, there was the abolition and repeal of Work Choices. Those on the other side were not prepared to go to the electorate and seek a mandate for Work Choices, but, after such a big win in the 2004 election, they realised they were never going to get another opportunity to foist such an unfair set of workplace laws on the Australian people. So they took that opportunity. They hurt a lot of people in the process, and it also brought about their own undoing in the end. The harsh reality is that they have not learnt from their mistakes. The Leader of the Opposition says: 'It was just a marketing problem. We shouldn't have called it "Work Choices". If we'd called it something else, the Australian people wouldn't have noticed.' He says he is quite happy to consider bringing back those laws, so long as they call them something else. I think the Australian people are going to see straight through that one, so you are going to have to do a bit better on that front if you are going to present an alternative to the current government, which has delivered on the areas it said it would deliver on.

In the short time remaining, I would like to reflect upon the decisive action the government took in relation to responding to the external threat of the global financial crisis. It was not something we made any election commitment on, and it became a very big focus of the government's activities throughout 2008 and 2009. At the end of the day, I have a very firm belief that the people in my community want to know that they have a government that is in charge so that when those external threats, those unexpected challenges, come forward, the government has the capacity to step up to the plate, seize the moment and take action to ensure security, particularly in a financial sense, as the government has done. Australia is the only advanced economy in the world not to have fallen into recession. That is the one inescapable fact that those on the other side do not know how to respond to. They do not want to talk about the economy. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition says he is bored by economics. Well, I would probably be bored by talking about an issue where the other side of politics was so dominant. I would want to talk about other issues. That dominance was never more clear or more starkly there to be seen by the Australian people than when those on the other side voted against the stimulus package.

I want to conclude by reflecting not only upon the inaction of those on the other side in voting against the stimulus package but also on the thought that the Leader of the Opposition—the man who now holds himself up as being fit to be the alternative leader of this nation—was not even in the chamber when we voted on the stimulus package. Newspaper reports at the time said he was with a couple of old colleagues, reminiscing and putting down a few bottles of wine in the parliamentary dining room. When the biggest challenge that faced the nation in the term of this government was to be confronted, the Leader of the Opposition was off having a quiet drink.