

03 June 2010

Main Committee
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2010-2011
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2010-2011
APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS)
BILL (NO. 1) 2010-2011
Second Reading

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (10.54AM) —I rise to speak in support of the [Appropriation Bill \(No. 1\) 2010-2011](#), the [Appropriation Bill \(No. 2\) 2009-2010](#) and the [Appropriation \(Parliamentary Departments\) Bill \(No. 1\) 2009-2010](#). The budget that was handed down by the Treasurer is a responsible budget. It is a budget that will return the financial position of the Commonwealth to surplus in three years time. That is three years ahead of schedule. It is a responsible budget because it recognises that, after having invested in key areas of the economy throughout the global financial crisis and having supported jobs and delivered the economic activity that flowed from the stimulus measures, it is now time for us to build for the future and build for recovery.

I note the success of those stimulus measures. The national accounts which were released yesterday really underlined the significance of the stimulus measures and their impact on the economy. The national accounts show that the economy grew by 0.5 per cent for the March quarter. That is a rate of 2.7 per cent annualised. Australia continues to be, as a result of these measures, one of the best-performing economies in the world. CommSec economist Savanth Sebastian said:

If these measures—

that is, the stimulus measures—

were not in the mix, effectively the Australian economy would have been broadly flat or even negative.

Scott Haslem, the UBS chief economist, said:

Traditionally economic growth has been split 80-20 between the private and public sector. Over the last year it was 60-40 in favour of the public sector as the private sector struggled.

So you can clearly see that, had it not been for that investment by the public sector to support jobs, to stimulate demand, the economy would not have been able to record the growth figures that have been achieved. Justin Smirk, St George chief economist, said:

Domestic demand, fired up by government spending and fiscal handouts, is the key driver for now ...

Clearly these respected market economists have concluded that the stimulus measures were integral to the achievement of that growth that has just been reported. I remind the House that those opposite voted against those stimulus measures. Had we not been able to secure the support of others in the other place, then we would not have been able to do what we did in steering the Australian economy through the global financial crisis, supporting jobs and making sure that the economy continued to grow and to grow strongly.

I wish to refer to a couple of graphs, which I will later seek leave to incorporate into the Hansard. In particular I would like to draw attention to a graph that is described as 'Fiscal position the envy of the world'. When we look at this graph, we can see in very stark terms that, when it comes to our fiscal position—returning the budget to surplus in three years, three years ahead of schedule—Australia is outperforming the rest of the advanced economies. If we look at the graph that is referred to as 'Net debt peaks dramatically lower', we see in very stark terms that Australia's net debt is at much more manageable levels than that of any comparable economy throughout the advanced world. This is as a result of good economic management over many years in this country, over several administrations. Reform initiatives that were undertaken by the Hawke and Keating governments and the budgetary position that was maintained—withstanding the escalation in spending—under the Howard government allowed the Australian economy to weather the storm through the good financial management of this government.

I want to refer to a couple of measures that are set out in the budget. In particular, I want to talk about health, because health is one of the key issues that take a very prominent place within the budget. We have delivered \$7.3 billion over five years starting from 2009-10, including \$417 million for more after-hours GP access, including 24-hour hotlines, and \$355 million for 23 new GP superclinics. I heard the member for Lyne, who is very passionate in advocating the needs of his community, talk about the need for a GP superclinic in his community. The member for Lyne had better be quick or he had better hope for the re-election of the Rudd Labor government, because without a Rudd Labor government that program, that investment in GP superclinics, will be ripped away by Tony Abbott. This is the same Tony Abbott who, when he was the Minister for Health and Ageing, ripped a billion dollars out of the health system. He now wants to rip away another \$820 million of health funding. He ripped a billion dollars away in government and now in opposition he wants to rip away \$820 million. There is no end to his determination to rip away base levels of funding within the health system.

If we have a look at the important area of education we see that there is a further attack that has been mounted by the opposition in relation to trades training centres. I am fortunate to come into this place and represent a community that has secured funding for two trades training centres delivering trades training opportunities in 13 local schools in my community. That program is going to be cut, the heart ripped out of it by the spending cuts that have been proposed by the opposition leader. Computers in schools has been a fantastic program. Come into the schools in my community and see the progress that has been made. So many of them

had ratios of fewer than one computer for every eight students and secured funding in the first round of this program. We now have all of our local schools, years 9 to 12, running at a ratio of one computer to every two students. We have a determination to reduce that to one to one. Those on the other side want to rip away the funds that have already been allocated for this program. They want to ensure that the schools in my community will not have the opportunity to move from the ratio of one to two to one to one. I will be fighting hard on this issue because I know how important it is for the educational opportunities of young people in my community. In fact, in my community approximately a thousand computers will not be delivered if there is a change of government. In terms of National Partnership funding, I see that there is also an attack on measures that are targeted towards teacher training and teaching quality. Schools in my community are getting the benefit of those funds and they will be subject to those cuts and those attacks.

I want to mention briefly skills, and in particular the Apprenticeship Kickstart program which has been a fantastic program that has delivered massive benefits in a community such as mine. If we have a look at the impact this has had on apprenticeship startups through the global financial crisis, we see that from December 2007 to February 2008 there were 212 apprenticeships taken up. From December 2008 to February 2009 it dropped to 165. Then have a look at what happened after Kickstart kicked in. It got the numbers up to 243, not only returning those figures to pre-GFC levels but exceeding them, giving more young people in my community opportunities to learn trades, to develop their skills and to move into those parts of the economy that require those skills so desperately. Those on the other side would attack these sorts of programs.

I will briefly refer to the resource super profits tax and what an important initiative this is for delivering benefits right across the economy, ensuring that the entire Australian economy, all of the Australian people, secure the benefits from the exploitation of our nation's mineral wealth. We will ensure that money is directed towards key initiatives that will stimulate and liberate economic activity right across the economy. There are cuts in company tax rates to 28 per cent—we are the only party proposing to cut company tax. Those on the other side, with their paid parental leave, that sham of a policy—

Mr Ciobo interjecting—

Mr BRADBURY —The member for Moncrieff knows that it is a sham of a policy. I do not believe he would ever have supported this if he was in any party room discussions that decided this because he knows it is a sham. It is an impost that has been imposed upon business, and arbitrarily on big business. Why? Because they had to find the money somehow.

The RSPT is about ensuring that all Australians secure the benefits of the exploitation of our mineral resources. They are a finite resource, they are non-renewable. They are the resources of the Australian people and once they are dug up and shipped off overseas, every time that happens a little bit of Australia's natural wealth is exhausted, dissipated. That is why it is so important that we are able to capture some of the benefit of that and spread it right across the economy to ensure that communities such as mine in Western Sydney are able to get some of the benefit of that. When the Reserve Bank makes its judgments on whether or not to increase interest rates it takes into account the rapid growth, the capacity constraints and all of the

challenges that occur in places like Western Australia and Queensland. Meanwhile, those small businesses in Western Sydney doing it tough get slugged with the same increases in interest rates where those capacity constraints lead to that effect.

What we say is, 'Let's share the benefits.' Let us make sure that small businesses in communities like mine get a tax cut, get an opportunity to build on the investment allowance that we introduced during the global financial crisis and get a one-off deduction of up to \$5,000 on their capital items that they purchase to invest in the future of their business.

We say that we should be investing in superannuation. I note that those on the other side always want to tell us, in the debate that we are having at the moment, that they support superannuation and that they think we should increase it but just not yet. With all of these things it is: 'Just not yet.' Their attitude is: 'Yes, we believe in an adequate retirement savings, but most of the people that we represent, well, they can adequately provide for that above and beyond what might be compulsory contributions, so the rest of the unwashed masses should be happy with nine per cent until we determine at some future point that they might be entitled to it.'

They have never supported superannuation. They opposed it from the start and they continue to oppose it today. I want to quote the Leader of the Opposition because this particular quote puts in very stark contrast the position of this side, the government, and what we want to do for working people to boost their retirement savings, and the approach of the Leader of the Opposition. He said this in 1995, but I have to say that comments he has made more recently reinforce this view. In 1995 he said:

Compulsory superannuation is one of the biggest con jobs ever foisted by government on the Australian people.

It is not a con job; it is an initiative that has delivered one of the biggest funds management sectors in the world. There is \$1.1 trillion under management. It has assisted in steering us through the global financial crisis. This is a great achievement this country has put in place and we want to build upon it. We want to make sure that everyday people in my community are able to retire with a decent standard of living.

I would like to conclude by saying that the trilogy response to the budget was like a play within a play. But, when we finally drilled down to what the response was, it was about opposing the things that will build a more prosperous future for Australia, going into recovery. It was about opposing health spending—but are we surprised, from someone who has a record of ripping money out of the system? It was about opposing superannuation—but are we surprised, from someone who is on record as saying it is the biggest con job ever foisted on the Australian people? It is about opposing infrastructure spending—but are we surprised, from those who spent all of those years in government failing to invest in the infrastructure needs of this country and building capacity constraints that ultimately led to the interest rate increases that they told us we would never have because they said they would keep them at record lows. All they did was lie to the Australian people. They failed to tell the Australian people that the Reserve Bank makes these judgments independently. To the extent that they could contribute to taking the pressure off interest rates by investing in infrastructure, they were asleep at the wheel and failed.

We have someone who is also opposed to the resource super profits tax and opposed to putting

a price on carbon. This is an opposition led by leader that is opposed—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER —I draw the member's attention to the word 'lie' and I ask him to please withdraw that comment from his statement.

Mr BRADBURY —If that suits you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I withdraw. What the opposition and particularly the Leader of the Opposition stand for is opposing things—oppose, oppose, oppose. If you really want to have a look at what it is that they stand for, when you strip away all of the hot air that is the opposition of the opposition, they stand for one thing and that is Work Choices. They stand for ripping away the standards, the conditions and the wages of working people. They did it when they were in office and the sad reality is that they failed to hear the message the Australian people sent them at the last election, and that was: 'Get your hands off our penalty rates, get your hands off our unfair dismissal protections and get your hands off the protections that mean that we are not forced to go into workplaces and bargain one-on-one with an employer that has vastly superior bargaining power.' They were the messages that they sent to the former government. The failure of this opposition to hear those messages is something I intend to spend every waking hour between now and the next election informing and advising my community about. I seek leave to have the graphs I referred to incorporated in Hansard.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs MA May)—I advise the member that a previous speaker also sought to have similar documents incorporated. I advise you that the incorporation of the documents will only be granted if the documents meet the Speaker's requirements.

Mr BRADBURY —I understand that.