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Budget 2010 – Nothing for Mornington **Legislative Assembly 26th May 2010**

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Before I begin commenting on what passes for a 2010–11 budget, I turn to a comment made earlier by the member for Essendon. I stress that I have worked very cooperatively and, I think, productively with the member for Essendon for the last three and a half years, so I know she is a good operator, but she made some interesting claims about the condition of the health system. She said that since 1999 the health system had improved when it has actually gone backwards.

If you go through the *Your Hospitals* reports, you will see that the contrast between 2009–10 and 1999 is stark. In the last 12 months 137 000 people were left sitting on hospital trolleys for more than 8 hours, 10 000 more than in the previous year, and 69 000 patients did not receive appropriate care in the proper time frame.

If you compare that with the 1999 figure, you will find that 72 per cent of patients received care in the appropriate time frame in 1999, while it has now declined to 66 per cent. To suggest that the health system is in much better condition than it was in 1999 is clearly inaccurate.

The Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill does absolutely nothing for the seat of Mornington, it does next to nothing for the Mornington Peninsula and it has done precious little for the state of Victoria overall. It is a cynical and failed exercise in vote buying. If you look at the index of the budget documents, you can see very quickly where it is focused. In fact I was doing that while the Treasurer was speaking the other week, and it was very apparent where the focus was. It is about holding votes in marginal Labor seats, nothing more and nothing less.

There is no reasonable budget for the rest of the state, and there is little or no joy in this budget for the Mornington Peninsula. Of the new schools provided for in the budget, 30 of 36 are in Labor-held seats.

Of that money, \$30 million goes into 17 marginal electorates and — surprise, surprise! — 13 of them are held by government members. There are 112 new infrastructure projects, of which 89 are projects in Labor-held seats, and 90 per cent of the total funding provided for those new infrastructure projects is to be spent in Labor-held seats.

This budget is an exercise in conning the public; it is a tawdry attempt to persuade people that this government should be given yet another chance but it is going to fail, because people are simply not buying the story.

It is not just me saying that the budget has done very little for the Mornington Peninsula. The *Mornington and Southern Peninsula Mail* of 12 May cited Mr Kevin Clarke, one of the shire's directors, whose preliminary comment was:

We would hope to get a small amount of money out of some programs.

The paper went on to quote Mr Clarke as saying that:

the shire would expect a share of \$1 million ear-marked for pest and weed control in state parks.

He further said that the shire would be more than capable of spending \$1 million on pest and weed control in state parks itself. Yet \$1 million is what has been allocated for the state.

He also commented on neighbourhood safer places — the \$500 000 that has been made available to local government for that — but in order to receive any of that funding, local government is required to do a lot of work, which is a further burden on ratepayers. The paper also observed, and I think it is quite right, that:

... the ALP pollies praise the 'facility improvements' for four schools and improvements for five level crossings —

including the Frankston electorate —

... all of which had previously been announced.

In other words, there is absolutely no new money at all. In my electorate we have no investment in social infrastructure and no investment in physical infrastructure despite a substantial and continuing growth in population.

We have escalating violence. The front page of the *Mornington Peninsula Leader* this week reads 'Champion footballer left unrecognisable by a brutal bashing by gang of young men in Main St'. This is only the latest in a long line of violent assaults and attacks in the town of Mornington in the past 12 months.

Why do we have thugs carrying on in the way they do? Because they know that there are not enough coppers out on the streets to pick them up. So again and again we have young people's lives either severely disrupted, or in some cases destroyed, because our streets are no longer safe enough — but there is no money in this budget for that either. There are no extra police, and there is no funding to relieve peak-hour congestion.

Bungower Road, which is going to provide the main access to Peninsula Link when it finally gets built, has one lane each way, yet not 1 cent has been allocated for its upgrade. During peak hour it has now got a point where the traffic virtually does not move one way or the other; once Peninsula Link opens, in a couple of years, traffic along the entire road will grind to a halt.

The Mornington-Tyabb Road is basically in the same situation: it was due for duplication 10 years ago, it should have been duplicated 10 years ago, and we are still waiting for it.

Despite claims that there is additional funding for health — there may be money for one or two intensive care unit beds in Frankston Hospital — there is no serious additional funding. As I mentioned earlier, almost half the emergency department patients who require hospitalisation at Frankston Hospital are left waiting on a trolley for more than 8 hours. The government's target is 80 per cent; it is just managing 50 per cent, yet there is no more money to do anything about those issues.

My electorate had one project recognised in the state budget — one project split into two components, with \$675 000 for an upgrade at the Mount Martha sewerage treatment plant, which is important work but not exactly a major project; and \$1 million for a sewerage treatment plant education centre. I have no idea what that is but I am sure it will do good work, because if people know about the good or bad environmental impact that these sorts of facilities can have, then it is worthwhile. But that is the absolute total of the money that is available for the Mornington electorate.

I want to make a brief comment about Peninsula Link. The Minister for Roads and Ports, who unfortunately has now left the chamber, put out a press release on budget day, 4 May 2010, and listed in his highlights of transport projects funded in the 2010 state budget was \$759 million for the construction of Peninsula Link. That is just totally and absolutely wrong. There is not \$759 million; there is not 10 per cent of that; there is barely 1 per cent of that in the state budget. His statement was completely and utterly wrong; it is totally misleading to claim that that sort of capital is being spent. It is certainly misleading the public — —

Mr R. Smith — It is typical!

Mr MORRIS — Yes, the member for Warrandyte correctly interjects, it is typical of the way this government operates.

I want to speak briefly about Devilbend Reserve. It was slated for disposal by this government or, more accurately, by the Bracks government. There were two parcels of land on either side of Graydens Road: one side was a relatively small parcel and the other side has some 41 hectares.

Across Derril Road the property adjoins Woods Reserve, an intact block of very important local indigenous woodland. The property was listed for sale by the government, and government members were dragged kicking and screaming to the point where they had to meet a Liberal policy commitment not to sell the reserve. Nevertheless, government members could not restrain themselves — they had to sell part of the reserve — and what we have left is the 41 hectares.

A draft management plan was prepared and submissions sought. They closed in March 2009. Now, in May 2010, the final management plan still has not been released, and you have to wonder what exactly what is in it.

The battle for Devilbend has been a long, hard-fought pitched battle, firstly, to retain the reserve and stop it being sold off for residential use, and secondly, to have the reserve developed in an appropriate manner. Parks Victoria seemed desperate to develop the reserve in a manner which would maximise the return and which is totally inappropriate for the natural values and the systems that are present in this reserve.

Unfortunately this is part of a disturbing trend we are seeing in a number of locations but particularly on the Mornington Peninsula, where the government is not interested in making the necessary investment to conserve the property to support the native flora and fauna and to support the natural values that are present and capable of development on the property. The government is simply interested in turning the land over to a purpose which will return the highest, but certainly not the best, value to Treasury. That is a disturbing trend.

I will speak very briefly on the issue of funding of local government. The president of the MAV (Municipal Association of Victoria), Bill McArthur, has been quite vocal on this issue, and I certainly support many of the comments he has made. His press release on the budget raises the issues of the cost of maintaining vegetation and neighbourhood safer places. As I mentioned earlier when I spoke of Kevin Clarke, \$500 000 was allocated, but Cr McArthur estimates that the cost of maintaining each neighbourhood safer place may be as high as \$40 000.

I indicated that I would return to the issue of libraries. The member for Essendon said what a wonderful job this government has done in terms of funding libraries. We have now sunk to a point where the state government share of recurrent library funding is 20 per cent. It used to be dollar for dollar, but it has sunk to a point where it is now only 20 per cent of total funding.

I do not call that investing in libraries or providing the resources that people in our community need to continue to grow, to educate themselves and to broaden their horizons, and to claim anything else is totally false.

In his comments Cr McArthur rightly identified the government's willingness to load councils up with additional responsibilities and costs but without providing any extra money.

If we look at the national figures, we see that local government rates and charges in Victoria have increased over the last decade at a much faster rate than anywhere else simply because of the level of cost shifting that has been going on.

This budget is all style and no substance. It is a cynical exercise. It is an attempt to convince voters in marginal seats that they should give the government another chance. The only vision in this budget is incredibly short term and it expires in November, and hopefully so too will the cynical, manipulative and short-sighted Brumby government.
