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## HERBERT RIVER EXPRESS COLUMN JULY 2011

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**For immediate release**

### **2011 STATE BUDGET REPORT**

The Bligh Government's recent budget is a failure. It increases debt to \$85 billion, increases the cost of living for families and the cost of doing business in Queensland. Despite the Bligh Government claiming revenues from the fire sale of state assets including railways, forests, ports and motorways, would be used to reduce Labor's debt, the projected debt is the same as it was before the fire sale. This debt is massive and unprecedented. At some point, it has to be paid back.

The Bligh Labor Government wants you to believe all the state's financial problems were due to the natural disasters that occurred in Queensland earlier this year. In fact, the state's debt was already \$65 billion before the floods and Cyclone Yasi. Furthermore, the commitments in this budget can not be relied upon, because the figures do not take into account the impact of the Gillard Labor Government's carbon tax (which the Bligh Labor Government supports) on Queensland's economy.

The budget allocations in the Hinchinbrook electorate are unremarkable. They are a mixture of commitments that have been announced previously, have been funded by the federal government, are part of natural disasters claims, or are a result of the damage caused by Cyclone Yasi. There are certainly few initiatives in the budget that represent a positive decision by the Bligh Labor Government to support industries, businesses and households in the Herbert River district.

There is the second installment of \$25 million, for a total project cost of \$115 million of federal funding, for the northern section of the Cardwell Range, north of Ingham, on the Bruce Highway. There is also the continuing project by Powerlink to replace the 132 kVA line with a 275 kVA between Yabulu and Ingham and the commencement of the upgrade of the same line between Ingham and Cardwell. However, the funding for these projects was announced in previous budget years.

The Bligh Government's claim that the removal of the ambulance levy will reduce electricity bills is hypocritical given it was the Beattie Government that introduced the ambulance levy in the first place. Average electricity bills are still set to go up by \$118 next year, so the relief from removal of the ambulance levy is already lost. There is no increase in the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme to support patients from the Herbert River district travel long distances for medical treatment.

One of the most appalling aspects of the Bligh Government's budget is its decision to slug home buyers with an extra \$7,000 in transfer duty on their principal place of residence. How on earth can Labor justify increasing the cost on families purchasing a family home? Motor vehicle registration will increase by another 3 % next year, on top of a 24 % increase over the last three years. This comes on top of recent increases in drivers licence fees and the removal of the fuel tax rebate in 2009.

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