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Hinchinbrook Central
86-92 Herbert Street, INGHAM, QLD, 4850
Post: PO Box 1515, INGHAM, QLD, 4850
E-mail: hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au
Website: www.andrewcripps.com.au
Phone: 07 4776 1428 Fax: 07 4776 3503
Local Call: 1800 810 656

NORTHERN BEACHES BULLETIN

Andrew Cripps MP State Member for Hinchinbrook
Proudly Representing Townsville's Northern Beaches

NORTHERN BEACHES BUDGET REPORT

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL POSITION

The Bligh Labor Government's recent budget increases debt to \$85 billion, increases the cost of living for families and the cost of doing business in Queensland. Despite the Bligh Labor Government claiming revenues from the sale of state assets, including our railways, forests, ports and motorways, would be used to reduce Queensland's debt, the projected debt remains the same as it was before the fire sale.

Premier Bligh and Treasurer Fraser want people 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.

With the assets gone, the Bligh Labor Government's debt is still projected to reach \$85 billion. This debt is massive and unprecedented. At some point, it has to be paid back.

EDUCATION

I am concerned about an apparent cut of \$300,000 from the capital budget to construct a new kindergarten at Bluewater State School. It appears that the allocation of \$1.5 million in last year's budget has fallen to \$1.2 million in this year's budget.

Once again, I want to raise the issue of the need for a new primary school to be constructed in the near future to service the rapidly growing area of the northern beaches of Townsville. Residential growth on the northern beaches in my electorate—in North Shore, Burdell, Bushland Beach and Mount Low—is still very strong. Education Queensland needs to plan properly for this growth.

ENERGY

Powerlink is continuing to fund its \$121 million upgrade of the high voltage 132 KVA transmission line with a 275 KVA transmission line between Yabulu and Ingham.

ROADS

There are no new allocations in the budget for state controlled roads in my electorate. The only new money will be the \$4.5 million over two years on Mt Low Parkway, which is a council road, through the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme. A part of the Bruce Highway I feel strongly about is the section between Black River and Bluewater.

Planning for this section to be widened to four lanes needs to be a priority as the Northern Beaches continues to grow. Strong residential growth and traffic associated with the Yabulu nickel refinery means that this section warrants more attention from Main Roads.

RAIL LEVEL CROSSING ACCIDENT

I am very relieved that, although three people were seriously hurt in the recent rail level crossing accident at Bambaroo, south of Ingham, there were no fatalities on this occasion. I strongly urge all road users to be on the look out for trains when crossing railway lines at all times.

Advice from the Minister for transport that there will be a full investigation into this accident, the third in the Hinchinbrook electorate in the last three years, is welcome. However, the fast tracked upgrades at rail crossings across North Queensland following the previous accidents could indicate that more are required to achieve a meaningful level of rail level crossing safety across North Queensland. Three accidents in three years in my electorate is just too many!

ROLLINGSTONE GENEROSITY

As Northern Beaches Bulletin readers would know, the northern end of my electorate of Hinchinbrook between Ingham and Innisfail received a terrible battering from Cyclone Yasi. There have been numerous examples of generosity towards these affected communities. One example that has come to my attention is the donations by the Rollingstone & District Community Association (RADCA), to not-for-profit organisations in Cardwell and Tully.

RADCA donated \$1000 to the volunteers who run the Cardwell Op Shop. The premises out of which the Cardwell Op Shop previously operated were destroyed by Cyclone Yasi. The Cardwell Op Shop volunteers are facing a range of expenses to set up their shop in alternative premises and so this donation is very welcome.

RADCA also made a donation of \$1000 to the Tully Senior Citizens Association. The Tully Senior Citizens Hall was also completely destroyed by Cyclone Yasi. Tully Senior Citizens Association is currently raising money to build a new hall in Tully, which will be a great asset not just to its members, but to the whole community.

I would like to sincerely thank RADCA for its generosity. Such kindness certainly makes me proud to be the local MP for the communities on the Northern Beaches of Townsville.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT TALK

I noticed that Minister for Main Roads and Thuringowa MP, Craig Wallace, was recently talking about how keen he was to see the expansion of public transport on the Northern Beaches of Townsville (*Townsville Bulletin*, 9/7/2011). The Minister for Transport, Annastacia Palaszczuk was in Townsville at the time and Mr Wallace was talking about increasing bus services to growing areas of the city.

Currently, there are no public bus services north of the Black River. My constituents in these areas of the Northern Beaches will recall I have on several occasions over several years raised the issue of the need for public transport services to be considered for these communities, particularly for seniors who can't drive and pensioners who can't afford to run a vehicle.

I'm confident that some consultation with the local community on the Northern Beaches would reveal that some trial bus timetables regularly servicing Rollingstone and Bagal, Toomulla, Bluewater and Toolakea, Purono Park, Saunders Beach, Yabulu and Black River, would result in some regular and very grateful customers.

It would be great to add such a service to the bus services currently picking up and delivering passengers to Bushland Beach, Mount Low, Burdell and North Shore. What about it Craig?

Are you Digital TV Ready? - Household Assistance Scheme

Analog TV is scheduled to be switched off in North Queensland on 6th December 2011. In order to keep receiving free-to-air TV after the analog signals are switched off, you'll need a television that is capable of receiving digital signals. There are a number of ways to be digital ready, including converting your existing analog TV using a digital set-top box or digital TV recorder, or upgrade to a TV with a built-in digital tuner.

The Household Assistance Scheme has been introduced to help eligible households switch to digital TV free-of-charge. To be eligible, you need to be receiving a full rate of any of the following:

- An Aged Pension
- A Disability Support Pensioner
- On a Carers Payment
- Receiving a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Service Pension
- Eligible for a DVA Income Support Supplement

This scheme includes, free of charge, one high definition set-top box per household, installation and demonstration of your new equipment by a technician, any cabling, antenna or satellite systems (depending on whether you own your own home) and 12 months of support and service. You must also own a functioning TV, must not have access to digital TV but live in an area that is currently switching off its analog TV signals.

For more information visit [www.australia.gov.au/digital ready](http://www.australia.gov.au/digital%20ready) or call Centrelink on 1800 556 443.