

STATE BUDGETARY POSITION

**157. Mr F. ALBAN to the Treasurer:**

Constituents in my electorate of Swan Hills are increasingly worried about the state's budgetary position. Can the Treasurer explain why —

Several members interjected.

**Mr F. ALBAN:** I am glad members opposite are very happy because they will be there quite a long time! So enjoy yourselves on that side of the chamber!

Can the Treasurer explain why our budget is not in a better state despite the recent record resources boom?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:**

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question. Having visited the member's electorate during the campaign, I am aware of the issues that confront small business in that electorate and their interest in the state's economy. It is obvious to everyone in this house that the people of the electorate of Swan Hills have something that is completely foreign to the members of the opposition, and that is an understanding of current world events! They are obviously people who pick up newspapers and turn the television on when the news is on and see things like "global financial crisis"—GFC. I will spell it out to members opposite every day because they do not seem to understand it is happening. They do not seem to understand that it is having a significant impact on economies across Australia and state and federal finances across Australia. It is impacting on —

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I would be very careful, my friend! For members interested, hop on the Senate website and look at what it says about that individual and his handling of the last crisis to hit this state—the Varanus Island crisis! He came in here and said, "Do you know what happened? I flew to Varanus Island. I came back, and do you know what happened? The pipeline blew up!" He flew all the way up there to work out that a pipeline had blown up!

Several members interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I wish to focus on four key issues. Firstly, the fact —

**The SPEAKER:** This is going to be the last question today. Some members may think that is a great thing. I think it is possible for this place to actually deal with more questions and get more answers. I would urge the Treasurer to answer the question.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I thank the Speaker for that guidance.

There are four key issues I will touch on. These are the four legacies of eight years of Labor. Firstly, we have inherited a rate of recurrent spending growth that is non-sustainable. The opposition grew fat whilst in government on the hard work of the taxpayers of this state. Secondly, the previous government handed down —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I am trying to follow your instructions, Mr Speaker. Secondly, the previous government handed down a budget in May of this year that saw this state's finances heading into dangerous, perilous territory, with state debt rising to record levels and the surplus effectively evaporating. The third legacy was a capital works program that was never delivered on time and on budget. The fourth legacy—I will close on this—is land tax, and taxation in general. The fourth legacy that the former government left the people of this state with is the most oppressive taxation regime in the history of any state-based jurisdiction in Australia. If the people of WA want any reminder of that legacy, it will probably be turning up in the mail shortly in the form of that land tax assessment. Land tax assessments were based on rates that the former Treasurer approved in the May budget, based on figures that he knew when he approved them. In the May budget, the then Treasurer said that land tax bills will go up by 30 per cent.

Several members interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** The former Treasurer, like some modern-day fiscal Vlad the Impaler, has reached up out of the political grave and stuck his knife into the bones of Western Australian taxpayers! I will give members two examples. The member for Murray-Wellington brought me an example yesterday of a land tax payer in his electorate whose land tax went up from \$5 892 to \$20 519—a 250 per cent increase. Yesterday afternoon, the member for Wanneroo saw me with an example of land tax that was \$33 970, and it went up to only \$450 000! Is that a 30 per cent increase or is that 1 220 per cent increase?

A government member: Is that CPI?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Yes—in Zimbabwe! I can see them now!

However, I will tell members what I will do. I will write all members a pro forma letter that will explain very clearly why people who own property in this state are being ripped off. It will have a photo of the current Leader of the Opposition on it and his phone number so people can ring up, and it will explain it very clearly. We will send it to members of the government and to members of the opposition. That is the Leader of the Opposition's final legacy to the people of Western Australia.