

BUDGET, OPPOSITION CALLS

1026. Mr O'GORMAN to the Treasurer:

I refer to calls by opposition members for government spending to be increased, taxes to be reduced and various cuts to be reversed. What will be the effect of these decisions on the state budget?

Mr RIPPER replied:

I suppose -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr RIPPER: I suppose that one of the few privileges of being in Opposition is being able to eat one's cake and have it too. Even so, there must come a point when even the failed financial managers opposite have to put forward a credible financial management plan. That point is today. Members opposite presided over a 5.6 per cent per annum growth rate in expenses, five deficits out of eight budgets and a AAA credit rating that was on the brink of being lost when we came to power, so it is a bit rich for them to lecture us on finances. Their performance in public over the past few days shows that they have not learnt their lesson. There was a 5.6 per cent per annum average growth in expenses when they were in power, and they are at it again.

The shadow Minister for Community Development, the member for Hillarys, has demanded that the Government reverse its decision on parent education centres. That is a cost of \$3.2 million for the duration of the forward estimates. Has the Leader of the Opposition costed that into his financial management plan? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has said that we should immediately increase funding for a series of capital and recurrent projects in the south west. Has that been costed into the Leader of the Opposition's financial management plan? To top it off, the Leader of the Opposition has said that our tax increases of \$110 million - the 0.1 of an \$11.1 billion budget - are not justified and should be reversed. I ask the Leader of the Opposition if that is costed into his financial management plan.

The moment of truth has arrived. We will listen to the budget reply with some interest to see how the Leader of the Opposition plans to reduce debts, reduce taxes, reverse cuts and increase spending while maintaining a surplus. He would be a financial Houdini if he could do that.

Mr Johnson: I want to thank you for saying what you have said because people outside -

The SPEAKER: Is the member finished yet?

Mr Johnson: I thought you wanted an interjection.

The SPEAKER: No, I did not.