

STATE BUDGET CRITICISM - PREMIER'S RESPONSE

211. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

The government's latest budget has received massive criticism from across all sectors including the Australian Nursing Federation, the Australian Medical Association, the Real Estate Institute of WA, the Property Council of Australia, the Western Australian Council of Social Service, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, the Western Australian Sustainable Energy Association, the WA Conservation Council, the State School Teachers' Union of WA and the Community and Public Sector Union.

- (1) Why is it that the Premier's latest angry outburst in response to this overwhelming criticism of the budget is targeted at the head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, John Langoulant?
- (2) Why is it, as with Maxine Murray, the independent Commissioner for Public Sector Standards, the Premier always reacts to justified criticism with bullying and thuggish personal attacks?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

- (1)-(2) I take personally that sort of terrible criticism. I find it very hurtful that the Leader of the Opposition should make those kinds of remarks about me. What was it that he said; that I am what?

Mr P.D. Omodei: You always react to justified criticism with bullying and thuggish personal attacks.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am tempted to pull out a few lines from movies and songs. Having teenage daughters I have become familiar with the music of people like Pink and the Dixie Chicks. They are wonderful people.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They are not bad. I think the Dixie Chicks' retort to that sort of criticism was "I'm not ready to make nice." I think that means that when I am criticised, it is perfectly reasonable - perhaps it is the way I have been brought up - to point out the weaknesses in the criticism. If people take that as being thuggish and bullying, so be it. I was also brought up in an environment that taught me to never take a backwards step.

Mr G. Snook: Were you taught humility?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Absolutely. The general characteristics of all the people who came from my area are very much the same. They stand up for themselves if they think they are right and do not back off. We were taught that if we got criticised, we should point out what is wrong.

What a great budget it was. I could have a field day in this place. We now have the nation's most generous first home buyers assistance package.

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: One of the things that I was also taught as a child was to never interrupt when people are on their feet, be respectful and respect my elders. It is very difficult sometimes. We have the most generous first home buyers package in Australia by a very long way. Everything else around Australia pales into insignificance. In fact, the rest of the country can hardly believe how generous we have been. Motor vehicle stamp duty relief has produced a very good comparative result.

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Another thing that I was taught in the humble background of Mt Lockyer was to be honest. I was taught to be truthful, not dishonest. I was taught not to be a conniving, scheming, dishonest liar. I was taught to be honest and never stab one's mates in the back. Where I came from, nobody used to get stabbed in the back. If someone wanted to take someone else on, he went up to that person, looked them in the eye and said, "I'm going to take you on." I think the people from Kalgoorlie are very much the same; they were brought up the same way. They are honest and not deceitful, and if they think a person deserves to be criticised or attacked or be done over, they let them know about it. It should not be done behind a person's back. People should not scheme in a car park under the cover of darkness. People should not do that sort of thing.

Where was I? Our land tax regime is so much better now and so much in advance of the rest of the nation that it is almost incomparable.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Are they going up or down?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will get to that in a moment.

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Something else that was driven into me was to be literate. The member for Vasse is not. Off the top of my head, the land tax payable for land valued at about \$1 million in Western Australia has been reduced from several thousand dollars to about \$1 800.

Mr T. Buswell: What would the bill on that property be next year? It will be more.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member should take on board the lesson I just taught him. He should wait his turn. The land tax payable on land valued at about \$1 million would be \$1 800. Land of the same value in Queensland, for example - just plucking a state out of the air - would produce a land tax bill of around \$12 000. There are a lot of properties valued at about \$500 000 on which land tax is payable in Western Australia. Before our changes, the land tax bill would have been \$855. It has been reduced to \$375. That is quite a considerable reduction.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, it is bad enough to interject but when the interjections are at such a level that the Premier cannot continue, it is totally unacceptable. The member for Vasse did not ask the question. I am sure he will desist from further interjections.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Land in Western Australia valued at \$500 000 now attracts land tax of \$375, as against \$855 prior to the changes. Not that I am picking on Queensland, but the same land valuation in that state is taxed, not at \$375 -

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Cottesloe to order for the first time.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Land tax in Queensland is not \$375, but \$4 500, or about 12 times the rate of that in Western Australia. That is not to mention the Australian Capital Territory, where a block of land with the same valuation would attract a land tax bill, compared to Western Australia's \$375, of \$6 475 - about 18 or 19 times the Western Australian rate. That is just land tax.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Your budget is based on a 50 per cent increase in land values.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We can see why the opposition, when in government, ran deficit after deficit.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is not true.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, it is. We hear about the need to rein in spending, but spending was completely uncontrolled, and there was no delivery of service.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is almost unbelievable - but it is not - that we hear this kind of commentary coming from the opposition front bench. It is a sad reflection on the quality of expertise there. However, if we were to apply to the federal budget the same logic and rules of analysis that the opposition is applying to the state budget - which, unfortunately some members of the media have internalised and done themselves - would Peter Costello have actually delivered a tax cut at all? No, he would not have, because the tax base has continued to grow, and it is growing because of economic growth. This is a scoop: according to the state opposition, Peter Costello did not deliver tax cuts; he delivered an \$11 billion tax hike. That is hard to believe, is it not? It is hard to believe that almost all the Australian media and all the commentators got it wrong, but the member for Vasse got it right. He knows that Peter Costello apparently did not deliver tax cuts, because the tax base has continued to grow. According to the economic literate from Vasse, Peter Costello actually delivered a tax slug of \$11 billion. I am sure the people of Western Australia, if they were to take anything seriously about the opposition, would be alarmed that the potential Treasurer should be making this assertion - namely, that Peter Costello, using the member for Vasse's analysis, has not delivered any tax cuts, but has rather delivered an \$11 billion tax hike. It was all a charade, according to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Anyway, it was a very good state budget. As to the criticism, I will paraphrase "Woosha" Worsfold, who was asked a question last night about some commentary about his team. He replied that everybody was free to make their own comments; they are free to be wrong.