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Liberal Senator for Queensland





The Queensland *on*Line

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THE EARLY ELECTION ANNA HAD TO HAVE

Queensland politics under Premier Anna Bligh just get stranger and stranger!

Ms Bligh really really wanted to go full-term but media speculation (!!) forced her hand. How foolish of the media to misinterpret a slew of deadwood Labor MP resignations, a razzamatazz launch of her personal website and an anti-LNP advertising campaign as indicating anything other than business as usual.

Now that we have the election being held on March 21, Ms Bligh is asking Queenslanders to believe that her Government are great economic managers.

Great management such as sending the Budget surplus that Labor inherited into a deficit of \$1.6 billion with worse to come; great management with our State's credit rating downgraded; not to mention the great management of hospitals, schools and infrastructure.

Of course, the issues are far too serious for Ms Bligh's nonsense to be amusing.

I'll be doing my utmost to support the Liberal National Party in the next three weeks and ask everyone to consider doing the same.

For more information on LNP candidates and policies and how you can help, go to www.lnp.org.au or call (07) 3844 0666.

IN PARLIAMENT



The Senate Estimates hearings will finally get underway this week after being postponed from the week of February 9.

In the wake of the terrible Victorian bushfires, it's easy to forget that this wasn't the initial reason for the Coalition agreeing to rearrange the Senate sittings.

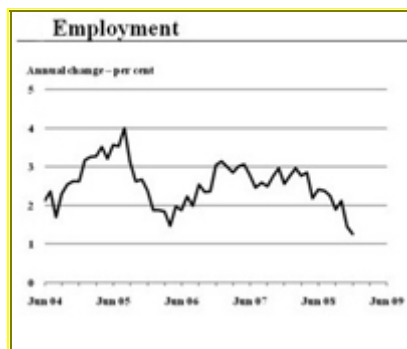
The decision to change the sittings was made before Black Saturday. It was made so the Senate could subject the Government's \$42 billion "stimulus" package to at least some scrutiny.

Bizarrely, Prime Minister Rudd and his acolytes initially put a 48-hour deadline on passage of the measures by the House of Representatives and the Senate. He behaved as though the **Coalition** were the ones being unreasonable for not agreeing to this and to putting Australia into deficit!

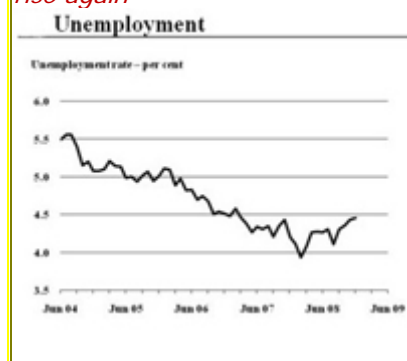
But the most disgusting aspect of Mr Rudd's handling of the debate was his attempt to say that Coalition opposition to the package would hold up assistance to Victorians affected by the bushfires.

He quickly backed away from the statement and left his acolytes to clean up after him but for a brief moment we saw behind the fatherly mask to the politician who will do or say anything to win.

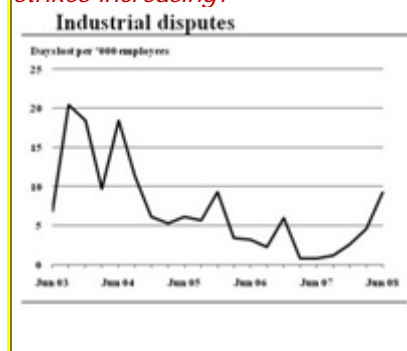
I've already spoken in the Senate ([here](#)) on the so-called Stimulus Package and some of its worst elements ([here](#)) and I've been heartened by the many emails I've received imploring the Coalition to take a responsible approach to the global financial crisis and to support new major infrastructure programs and tax cuts, not one-off handouts to people who, in quite a few cases, don't need them.



...then unemployment starts to rise again



So why are the days lost to strikes increasing?



Going from surplus to deficit has taken just on 16 months under a Labor Government.

Senate Estimates will provide more opportunity for Opposition senators to tease out the hasty, irresponsible and ill-considered aspects of this scheme - the second plank in the Rudd Labor Government's plan to turn the Howard Government's surplus into a \$200 billion deficit.

During Senate examination of the package, Treasury and other officials admitted that no-one had a clue what the Stimulus Package might achieve or even **if** it would achieve anything.

Another concerning aspect is Labor's proposed social housing package that has no strings on the Commonwealth funding that will fall into the sticky hands of the States. The States will be free to go on privately selling off current public housing that is "surplus" or "too expensive to maintain", whilst building new houses with Commonwealth money.

As a matter of interest, Senate Estimates hearings will run from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day between February 23 and February 26 and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on February 27.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH QUEENSLAND HOSPITALS

I'm starting to wonder whether Queensland hospitals shouldn't come with a health warning, after the release of the Productivity Commission's [Report On Government Services](#) (2009), which looked at preventable serious medical errors in 2006/2007.

More than a quarter of the cases of death or serious injury - 49 of the total 189 cases - happened in Queensland.

And this happened in 2006/2007 – well after the Department said they'd learnt their lesson following the estimated 80 deaths allegedly associated with Dr Jayant Patel in Bundaberg.

The Queensland incidents, noted in the Productivity Commission report, included 33 cases where procedures were done on the wrong patient or body part, six cases where a medication error killed the patient and four cases where mothers died in child birth.

Three patients were returned to surgery because an instrument or other material was left inside them during an operation, two patients committed suicide while admitted to hospital and one person was transfused with incompatible blood.

It's even more blood-chilling to compare New South Wales - hardly the paragon of hospital systems - with our so-called "Smart State":

- In Qld, 33 people had the wrong operation. In NSW there were nine cases.
- In Qld there were six cases of death from the wrong drug treatment. In NSW there were three.
- In Qld 3.1 per cent of patients had to return to hospital after surgery for "unplanned readmissions". In NSW it was 2.1 per cent.
- In Qld if a patient needs resuscitation – in other words has stopped breathing – there's a 98 per cent chance of being seen immediately. Except that means 2 in 100 aren't! In NSW it's 100 per cent.
- In Qld, there's a 67 per cent chance of being seen by a doctor within 10 minutes for a Category 2 (emergency) admission. In NSW it's 87 per cent.
- For Category 3 (urgent) cases 57 per cent of Qld patients are seen within 30 minutes. In NSW the odds rise to 71 per cent.

The Queensland Government claims that their "transparency" makes their figures look worse. But those who have been involved with Queensland Health in any capacity realise that "transparency" is a mighty big pile of spin to swallow.

It won't matter how many performance tables the Federal Government publishes. This won't fix Queensland Health.

In Queensland the problem is endemic. It's not a failure of individual doctors or nurses – it's a failure of Queensland Health and the unknown and uncounted bureaucratic machinery that Ms Bligh and her incompetent team have encouraged.

WAYNE SWAN AND THE COUNTDOWN TO DEFICIT



May 13, 2008 - Surplus \$21.7 billion

"We are budgeting for a surplus of \$21.7 billion in 2008-09, 1.8 per cent of GDP, the largest budget surplus as a share of GDP in nearly a decade. This honours and exceeds the 1.5 per cent target we set in January, without relying on revenue windfalls. It is a surplus built on substantial savings of \$33 billion over four years, including \$7 billion in 2008-09 alone."

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/national/swans-speech/2008/05/13/1210444430728.html>



August 27, 2008 - Surplus \$21.7 billion

"The most fundamental thing that we can do to reduce inflation is to build a significant budget surplus absolutely. What we have got to do is make our economy much more productive." <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/opinion/editorial/general/the-power-the-ingloriousness/1257318.aspx?storypage=0>



September 4, 2008 - Surplus \$21.7 billion

"We anticipated, in our Budget, what is now occurring – we were prepared for the challenges now unfolding, and we got it right."

<http://petermartin.blogspot.com/2008/09/believable-statement.html>



September 24, 2008 - Surplus \$21.7 billion

Mr Swan said the IMF report also had given a tick to the Rudd Government's budgetary policies. "It's very encouraging to get such a strong endorsement for the Government's Budget setting, the economic settings of the Budget and also I think for our long term reform agenda."

http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,24395613-5012180,00.html?from=public_rss



October 13, 2008 - Surplus \$21.7 billion

The Treasurer is adamant the budget remains in surplus. But he won't comment on whether next year's budget will go into deficit. "I'm not going to speculate about the budget next financial year."

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24500019-2702,00.html?from=public_rss



November 20, 2008 - Surplus \$5.6 billion

"We don't believe it is necessary in the current circumstances to borrow to invest in the strength of the Australian economy. The principle that we support is that we believe in surpluses over the cycle." In its mid-year economic forecasts released earlier this month, the Government slashed its revised Budget forecast from \$21.7 billion to \$5.6 billion. The figures also showed the Budget was expected to remain in surplus over the next three years.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/20/2425203.htm>



December 3, 2008 - Surplus \$5.6 billion

"If a temporary deficit was required to invest in the economy and to strengthen growth then that would be the responsible thing to do. But what we're doing through the economic security strategy and through the easing of monetary policy is everything to strengthen the economy and to take the rough edges off what's flowing through from the rest of the world." Mr Swan added that if Australia should incur a deficit, the Government would want it "to occur for the shortest possible period".

http://www.news.com.au/business/story/0,23636,24744370-5017676,00.html?from=public_rss



February 1, 2009 - Deficit \$22 billion

"Of course, what that means is, because of the unwinding of China, the global recession, it will be inevitable that Australia has a temporary Budget deficit."

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/money/story/0,26844,24993133-5015825,00.html>



February 12, 2009 - Treasurer Swan Introduces the Commonwealth Inscribed Stock Amendment Bill 2009 - enabling the Rudd Government to borrow up to \$200 billion



February 16, 2009 – Deficit \$22 billion

"This plan won't be a silver bullet ... This global recession will be long and difficult but we know the downturn would be harder on Australians without it."

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25058438-7583,00.html>

THE COALITION'S WWW.JOBSFORAUSTRALIA.COM

Nothing in the so-called Stimulus Package gives me any confidence in the Government's ability to contain unemployment.

The alleged 75,000 jobs that Labor boasted would be created by the \$10 billion Christmas Cash Splash just evaporated and now Mr Rudd and Mr Swan don't speak of creating jobs, but of "supporting" jobs.

That is, there won't be any new jobs but the Government might just be able to stop a few from disappearing.

Unemployment is now at a two-year high of 4.5 per cent and the Rudd Labor Government seems more concerned with handouts to help their State counterparts stay in government and with giving unions access to workplaces, even when they don't have any members there.

Australia's leading economic advisory group, Access Economics, predicts that the unemployment rate will rise to 7.5 per cent this year.

Roy Morgan Research's latest survey also highlights the dilemma of underemployment. More than 800,000 part-time workers want to work longer hours but can't.

That's why the Coalition has launched the www.jobsforaustralia.com website, a place where Australians are encouraged to share their ideas and help their fellow Australians.

Unlike the Rudd Government and GroceryChoice, it's not about slapping a website together and thinking the problem is solved.

Liberal Leader, Malcolm Turnbull, and coalition Senators and Members are holding 'Job Forums' across Australia to listen to the views and ideas of small business, the creators of most of Australia's jobs, and of those most affected by job loss.

Interestingly State Government-imposed payroll tax is always mentioned by business people as one of the biggest inhibitors of employment but never mentioned by Federal Labor.

IT'S TIME FOR A SENSIBLE DEBATE ON NUCLEAR POWER

In the debate over climate change and the need for Australia to take the lead, there's still little mention of one of the most environmentally friendly sources of energy – nuclear power.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) recently reported on [Managing Radioactive Waste and Used Reactor Fuel](#). Whilst Australia currently only handles very low-level radioactive waste, the report and accompanying DVD give me with immense confidence in the safety procedures that Australia uses when dealing with nuclear material.



ANSTO is the home of Australia's nuclear science expertise, which covers a broad field of scientific disciplines, from health, climate change, water resource management and a range of other disciplines and has safely managed radioactive waste and spent fuel for more than 50 years.

It's time to end the scare-mongering associated with nuclear power. Some reasons to consider nuclear power as part of our alternative energy supply are:

- Power needs to be supplied continuously and reliably. Solar or wind power cannot provide that reliability.
- "Clean energy" is not necessarily clean. All power sources have some environmental downside whether in the manufacture, installation or production. This includes the manufacture of solar panels and wind turbines. Comparing greenhouse gas emissions rates over the life-cycle of the project (including construction and transportation) nuclear fission energy has a lower life-cycle greenhouse gas emission rate than solar: 15 tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent per gigawatt-hour of electricity produced, compared to 39 tonnes for photovoltaic and 14 tonnes for wind power. Of course, the rates were higher again for fossil-fuel sources like natural gas (469 tonnes) or coal (974 tonnes). <http://fti.neep.wisc.edu/pdf/fdm1185.pdf>
- A 2001 study by the Paul Scherrer Institute in Switzerland <http://gabe.web.psi.ch/research/ra/?forprint> found that, between 1970 and 1992, nuclear power had the best safety record of all major energy sources, in terms of total number of deaths and deaths per terawatt of energy produced each year. The results for the top four sources were coal: 6,400 total deaths, 342 deaths per terawatt per year; hydro power: 4,000 total deaths, 884 deaths per terawatt per year; natural gas: 1,200 total deaths, 85 deaths per terawatt per year; nuclear power: 31 total deaths, 8 deaths per terawatt per year.
- All methods of power production have the potential to harm people. The World Health Organization (WHO) studies after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster concluded that 75 deaths could be directly attributed to the accident. The 1975 collapse of the Banqiao/Shimantan hydroelectric dams in China (only declassified in 2005) drowned an estimated 26,000 people, while 167 people died in 1998 when Occidental Petroleum's Alpha offshore oil production platform in the North Sea exploded. Contrary to popular perceptions, the 1979 Three Mile Island accident in the US resulted in no reported deaths or illnesses.
- According to the [Energy Information Administration](#), the operation, maintenance and fuel costs per kilowatt-hour for nuclear plants are more than twice those for hydroelectric, but almost a third less than those for fossil steam energy and two-thirds less than either gas turbine energy or small-scale photovoltaic or wind energy.
- There are currently 439 nuclear power reactors operating across 31 countries. As of 2005, nuclear power provided 6.3 per cent of the world's energy and 15 per cent of the world's electricity. If the existing plants were replaced over the next 50 years with current power sources, carbon emissions would increase by 12.5 gigatonnes a year.

Despite the arguments in favour of nuclear power, the Labor governments are refusing to even open the subject for discussion. Currently the Government's proposed Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) would protect coal-fired electricity producers by providing free permits worth \$3.9 billion in the first five years of the ETS, despite electricity production being the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

We urgently need to unemotionally examine available nuclear technology and waste storage operations and factor nuclear power into the equation.

TOURISM - THE POOR COUSIN TO THE AUTO INDUSTRY

Australian automobile manufacturing employs 64,000 workers, has a 20 per cent share of the Australian market, and suffered a sales drop of 14.5 per cent in the year to September compared to a drop of 3.6 per cent across all industry.

It's a shrinking share of a shrinking market, and yet Industry Minister Kim Carr has provided the automobile industry with a \$6.2 billion support package, or nearly \$100,000 per worker.

In Queensland, tourism contributed \$8.8 billion to Queensland's economy – and nationally around \$85 billion to the Australian economy - during the same period, making it our second largest industry after coal mining. Across Australia, tourism employs 400,000 people directly, with 190,000 of those jobs in Queensland. Last year there were 2.1 million international and 16.7 million domestic visitors to Queensland, or a total of 18.8 million people who spent at least one night in Queensland on holiday.

In North Queensland, tourism contributes \$2.4 billion to the local economy, and accounts for a massive 47 per cent of the export income. Tourism in the North directly employs more than 20,000 people, and one full-time job is created for every 65 international visitors or 167 domestic visitors.

Tourism Australia predicts that 2009 will be the worst year in two decades, with a drop of 4.1 per cent in international visitors. At a time when the industry needs assistance to secure jobs and businesses, the Rudd Government has offered a miserable \$1.3 million for North Queensland.

So if you're an auto worker in Victoria or South Australia, your job is supported to the tune of almost \$97,000. If you're a hotel worker in Cairns or Townsville, the Government is willing to provide \$65 so you can keep your job.

This comes on top of the problems that North Queensland tourism is having getting out the message that **most tourist areas are "business as usual"** and not flood affected.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE FLOOD

It sometimes seems as though floodwaters in Northern and Western Queensland will never recede, with Ingham on the receiving end of yet another deluge on Monday night. So far 62 per cent of Queensland has been flood-affected, with the damage bill at \$210 million and rising.

One factor that we "city-slickers" tend to overlook is the shortages that occur even in "normal" times, but especially during floods.

This month, due to road closures around Ingham, many towns in North Queensland started to run out of staple grocery items. The same shortages affected western Queensland, from Mount Isa to Longreach.

These are just some of the issues that flood victims have to cope with. On top of that, many primary producers in the North have had crops destroyed.

We can expect to see an increase in fruit and vegetable prices over the coming months due to the natural disasters in North Queensland and Victoria.

Donations to help our fellow Queenslanders can be made at any of the major banks - Commonwealth, Westpac, NAB, ANZ, Suncorp Metway and the Bank of Queensland. Donors can also contact the Smart Services Queensland Call Centre on 1800 173 349 with their credit card details.

FEBRUARY SHOPSMART



The latest ShopSmart figures for February are on the website at www.shopsmart.sueboyce.com.au. The average cost of the ShopSmart basket went up by 45 cents, with a high of \$3.34.

Since the ShopSmart survey began in July last year prices have increased by 4.01 per cent.

This month we've also included a link to a new survey on [rising fruit and vegetable prices](#).

The ShopSmart website also includes lots of money saving tips and financial planning information.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On March 8 each year we celebrate International Women's Day and the achievements of women who inspire other women to make a difference in their community.

In 2008, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) hosted more than 45 events with 13,000 participants in Australia, and I encourage you to attend your local International Women's Day event this year.

I'll be at the Unifem Breakfast at the Convention Centre on March 5 and with Queensland Resources Council's *Women in Mining* on March 6, but there are also events planned for Townsville, Cairns, Lowood, Maleny, Redcliffe, Charters Towers and Bundaberg – see <http://www.unifem.org.au/node/271> for further details.

You can find out more at www.unifem.org.au.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

NRMA Insurance will open the latest round of community grant funding on March 2, with applications closing on March 31.

Community organisations can apply for grants of up to \$5,000 (including GST) for road safety, crime prevention, environmental, or emergency readiness and response initiatives. For further information, including guidelines and application forms, go to <http://www.nrmaql.com.au/about-us/community/help-grants/index.shtml>.

I am willing to support worthwhile applications for any community funding, so please feel free to contact me if I can help.

YOUR COMMENTS

I always read with pleasure "Queensland On-Line". I think it is very informative and a great way to keep people informed on what is happening so keep up the good work. – KH

Thanks Sue for your newsletter I enjoyed reading it. I don't know what the coalition can do to get a fair deal from the print and electronic media, as they both seem to give Rudd and his Labor party a huge tick on their performance in the first year of office particularly in the handling of global economic crisis. – PH

I always enjoy reading "Queensland online " I thought that this issue was particularly full of interest. – HW

Thank you for your effort to post information online to me re "carryings-on" in parliament – it would be great if there were more like you, then the next election would be that much easier to win. Regards – KC

I applaud your efforts at maintaining the endeavour to have the immigration restraint on people with Down Syndrome done away with. – RM

I would like to thank you for the email received it was very enlightening into matters in the state and further. Keep up the good work and I look forward to receiving more emails from your office. I have forwarded this onto several LNP members who are not on email. - D&G

Thankyou for your report. As an Aeronautical Engineer (aircraft designer) for 40 odd years and a member of the Liberal Party now LNP for the same period, I agree entirely with your comments on nuclear power. It is by far the least polluting of all of the power sources and in my view inevitable. It is very safe if properly managed, the U.S. Navy has never had a reactor accident. – BW

Your Dec. 17 "On Line" letter was very informative and interesting as previous issues have been Congrats to you and your staff for its high standard! - PN

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