




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 10 September 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.46 pm): I rise to address the cognate debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation Bill 2020. I heard the member for Mansfield talk about who may not have a plan, but I would like to remind the member for Mansfield and all of those members opposite that even before the COVID-19 health emergency debt in Queensland was at \$91.8 billion. Queensland consistently had either the highest or second highest unemployment rate, the lowest level of business confidence and the highest number of bankruptcies of any state jurisdiction across Australia. This Labor government over the last five years has been woefully and inadequately prepared for the crisis we have seen with respect to the COVID-19 health pandemic.

Both of the bills we are debating as part of this cognate debate were declared urgent in this place under the standing orders earlier this week. Earlier today I heard some issues raised by the member for Clayfield in relation to the constitutionality of the process which is occurring. I would encourage the Labor Treasurer, the member for Woodridge, to table the government's legal advice, because that would be being open and transparent with the people of Queensland. We know that this Labor government has had a woeful track record when it comes to being open, transparent and fulsome with the people of Queensland.

At the outset, I do acknowledge that the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2020 provides an additional \$519,000 for unforeseen expenditure in the 2019-20 financial year for Parliamentary Services and the Legislative Assembly. I now wish to address in detail the second piece of legislation as part of the cognate debate, that is, the Appropriation Bill 2020.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is seeking additional interim supply of more than \$28.6 billion for government expenditure. This is roughly equivalent to another half of the 2019 Appropriation Act. I also note that this bill provides for a further \$1.114 billion of supplementary appropriation for the last financial year, that being 2019-20. As the LNP's shadow minister for communities, disability services and seniors, I note that within this Appropriation Bill a provision of almost \$120 million has been made for the unforeseen expenditure of the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors. Unfortunately, beyond detailing just two figures for controlled items—departmental services and equity adjustment—and a figure of more than \$115 million for administered items, that is all we know at this stage.

That is all we know at this stage because of the contempt that this Palaszczuk state Labor government has for proper accountability, rigorous scrutiny and comprehensive budgeting processes. This has been the consistent modus operandi of this government with respect to a number of processes over the last five years, and it is continuing again today.

Since the Palaszczuk state Labor government declared earlier this year that they would not be providing a full state budget as planned—not just an economic statement, not just an economic update or emergency appropriation bills, but a full state budget as planned—they have shown nothing but

disrespect for due process, as well as a complete lack of respect for the dire economic circumstances of Queenslanders and businesses throughout all of Queensland. Quite simply, this Labor government have all but given up. We have certainly seen that today with the retirement—and in some cases the forced retirement—of a number of members because of unions, factional deals and other issues that are going on within the government.

As confirmed through their own financial statements, the Palaszczuk state Labor government has broken its own fiscal principles, including: rather than reducing general government debt to revenue, Labor has now exploded it from 63 per cent to 108 per cent; rather than targeting net operating surpluses, Labor's \$8.1 billion budget deficit is now the worst in Queensland's history; and rather than maintaining competitive taxation, Labor has introduced nine new or increased taxes, ripping \$4 billion out of the Queensland economy.

On Monday this week, in a precursor to the bills currently being debated before this House, the Labor Treasurer proudly exhibited a 41-page brochure. This was in lieu of an actual detailed budgetary document outlining the true state of our economy and Queensland's state finances. State Labor have given up because, by their own projections, a further 72,000 Queenslanders will lose their jobs over the coming months. Rather than prospectively acting to ensure they do not lose their jobs, it seems like the Labor government are just giving up and saying, 'This is what Queenslanders have to expect.' That is simply not good enough for residents in not only the electorate of Moggill but the western suburbs of Brisbane and all of Queensland. Labor have given up because, by their own projections, debt will now reach a staggering \$102 billion by the end of this financial year—\$102 billion is a big figure that is going to have to be dealt with by subsequent generations. The truth at the very heart of this debate is that Labor simply have no comprehensive plan and no credible economic plan, and Labor refuse to adequately plan for economic recovery and the future of all Queenslanders, including those who live in the electorate of Moggill.

It was incredibly telling this week that, when pressed for further detail and commitments to not raise taxes on Queenslanders, the Labor Treasurer threw his hands up in the air and said, 'I cannot say what the future holds.' The Labor Treasurer might not want to tell Queenslanders what the future holds for them under a re-elected Palaszczuk state Labor government, but the Liberal National Party certainly can and we will be doing that all the way up until the next state election on 31 October. If the Palaszczuk state Labor government is re-elected—and, worse, re-elected to serve four years as part of a minority Labor-Greens government—the future for Queensland is extremely bleak. Coupled with the reckless, ill-thought policies of the Greens, the future under Labor is one of higher debt, higher taxes and even more taxes, and higher unemployment. That is not a future that any of us want to see in Queensland. It is certainly not a future for all of us as the rhetoric of the Greens would have you believe.

The Labor Treasurer has also announced that the Palaszczuk state Labor government will add a further \$4 billion in additional borrowings in what has been speculated as a pre-election slush fund. I note media reports that the Labor Treasurer has denied that these additional borrowings will be used as an election slush fund but Queenslanders will not be fooled. Just because Labor makes an announcement, using government funds, and brands it under the banner of 'Unite and Recover', it does not mean that it is not going to be used to help get the Labor government re-elected. It is insulting to the 234,000 Queenslanders who are currently unemployed and to the thousands of businesses, large and small, that have had to close their doors that Labor has tried to pass off the state of Queensland's economy, including the perilous state of our finances, as being almost entirely as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The fact remains that, even before this pandemic, debt was on track to reach \$91.8 billion and well before COVID-19 Queensland had the highest unemployment, the most bankruptcies and the lowest rate of business confidence. Whilst no-one can deny the significant economic shocks that we continue to experience, it is a fact that the Palaszczuk state Labor government had Queensland in a perilous economic state well before we entered this crisis. We all remember the first term of the Palaszczuk Labor government when they loaded debt onto government owned corporations and raided the defined benefit scheme and all of the other voodoo economic strategies they have been running here in Queensland over the last five years.

The Liberal National Party has a credible plan. The Liberal National Party is the only party in Queensland that has the vision, the policies and the plan to grow and protect jobs and make Queensland the economic powerhouse that it once was. We will achieve this through our stated fiscal principles: by striving to be the lowest taxing government in Australia, with no new taxes and a 10-year royalty freeze; by targeting fiscal balances across the economic cycle; by limiting general government expenditure to less than revenue; by stabilising Labor's debt, with the target of regaining Queensland's AAA credit rating; by setting improved standards in public service delivery and accountability across the whole of government; and, importantly, by building the job-creating infrastructure Queensland needs to boost state growth and improve productivity.

The Liberal National Party will stimulate the economy. We will deliver projects to bust traffic congestion, including our funded \$1 billion South-East Queensland congestion program which contains \$245 million for a new Centenary Bridge which will further alleviate traffic congestion across the western suburbs of Brisbane. The LNP is also committed to enhancing our health and education systems and creating a decade of secure jobs.

On education, I note again in the Appropriation Bill there is a further allocation for unforeseen expenditure for the Department of Education. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, as residents of the electorate of Moggill have seen over the last five years, Labor has all but refused to invest in the much needed education resources and additional school infrastructure that families and students deserve in the electorate of Moggill, whether that be classrooms, libraries or other facilities in all of our local schools. As the Labor member for Ipswich West knows all too well, Labor has continuously denied our constituents and their schoolchildren sufficient high school infrastructure, whilst also ignoring the need for a new high school to provide for the families of Mount Crosby, Karana Downs and surrounding suburbs. When it comes to the infrastructure for Kenmore State High School, Labor refuses to invest in the education of local students.

The Liberal National Party will step up if elected on 31 October and ensure that local infrastructure in our schools is invested in on behalf of students, teachers and families. That is why I was proud to be joined recently by the Liberal National Party leader, Deb Frecklington, when we announced a \$4 million commitment from the Liberal National Party for a much needed new school hall for the teachers, students and families of Kenmore State High School.

It is only the Liberal National Party that has the plans, the commitment and the passion to get Queensland out of this recession, to stimulate our economy and to get more Queenslanders back into work and protect their jobs. The Liberal National Party has the plans to build the infrastructure that Queensland needs, to invest in our hospitals, schools and roads, and to ensure water security for all Queenslanders. It is only the Liberal National Party that can get Queensland working again. Queenslanders cannot afford to re-elect a Labor government which continues to spend more than it earns. All Queenslanders understand that you cannot spend more than you earn.

Queenslanders know that the Labor government is reckless and has been financially irresponsible, without a credible economic plan for the future. Queenslanders desperately need a Liberal National Party government because Queensland needs a credible economic plan, a plan to continue to rebuild as a result of the COVID-19 global health pandemic. All Queenslanders need that, not only in the electorate of Moggill but across the western suburbs and all of Queensland.

The response of the federal coalition government has been outstanding. I want to particularly mention them because they have done an outstanding job with JobKeeper and JobSeeker and the business support that they have provided particularly here in Queensland. Can you imagine if we had a Frecklington LNP government here in Queensland working collaboratively and constructively with the federal Morrison coalition government to rebuild Queensland's economy to get Queensland working again?

Mr Saunders: We'd have cases everywhere. 'Open the borders, open the borders!'

Dr ROWAN: I hear the interjection from the member for Maryborough, but the sad fact is when everything has gone wrong here in Queensland, when it comes to this government managing the economy, when it comes to all of the mistakes that the Palaszczuk state Labor government has made, when it comes to their record of economic failure, when it comes to their record of failure across various departments, they have always tried to blame someone else. They always try to blame the federal coalition government. It is always someone else's fault. However, when it comes to their record here in Queensland, the Palaszczuk state Labor government has failed Queensland. They have failed our economy. They were woefully unprepared when we went into this health emergency and they still have no plan to rebuild Queensland's economy. They have no plan to create and protect jobs or to build the vital infrastructure that we need. They have no plans to ease traffic congestion and no plans to invest in our health and education system. It is simply not good enough for all Queenslanders.

All Queenslanders need a comprehensive economic plan. They need a mature and credible government that can certainly rebuild Queensland and can deliver the vital services and the vital infrastructure that is needed in Queensland. They need a government that will deliver for all of Queensland. I know that all members of the House on this side—all Liberal National Party members—are united and committed to delivering that on behalf of all of their constituents. It is certainly what we have been consistently hearing. It is certainly the feedback that we receive from all of our local residents in the electorate of Moggill. They desperately want a Liberal National Party government. It is only a Frecklington-led Liberal National Party government that can get Queensland working again.