




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2015

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Finance and Administration Committee, Report

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (3.24 pm): The Finance and Administration Committee heard that the Palaszczuk government's first budget delivers on all of the commitments that we made at the election. As promised, we have more than offset the spending of our election commitments. On final analysis, our commitments have been estimated by Treasury to cost \$1.97 billion over the next four years. Through offsets and reprioritisations, funding of \$2.31 billion was identified, providing a net fiscal improvement of \$340 million.

Importantly, the committee heard me advise that for 2015-16 we are forecasting a surplus of \$1.2 billion, with combined surpluses over the next four years of \$6.9 billion. These results have been achieved without redundancies—forced or voluntary—and through sensible measures that do not include selling our assets. Economic growth is forecast to improve from two per cent in 2014-15 to 4½ per cent in both 2015-16 and 2016-17. As a testament of Queensland's enduring economic strength, there is stronger growth in Queensland than in any other state in the country.

I was pleased to inform the committee that measures being implemented as part of the government's debt action plan will reduce general government debt by approximately \$7.5 billion in 2015-16 and across the forward estimates by \$9.6 billion compared to the level of debt in the absence of measures. As for the comments by the opposition leader about fiscal balances, he clearly does not understand that more than \$3 billion of revenue write-downs over the forward estimates factored into this budget would have occurred under the LNP if it were re-elected. I think that is a point that is lost on the opposition leader. In terms of general government debt or non-financial public sector debt, of course the budget showed that debt is forecast lower under Labor than under the LNP. Again, that is surely lost on those opposite.

The estimates process was a good opportunity to highlight where the Palaszczuk government's first budget contrasts with those of the previous LNP government. While the former government had almost no linkages between its election commitments and its budgets, what this estimates process clearly shows is that this government's first budget delivered on its election commitments. It showed a strong Labor budget that delivers jobs, economic certainty and of course sensible fiscal management.

Regarding my portfolio responsibilities in industrial relations, some of the first orders of business upon assuming office were to settle some of the many unresolved industrial matters left in a mess by the previous government. We are restoring fairness to Queensland workers through our suite of industrial relations reforms—promised at the election and working their way through the parliament.

We have a firm commitment to fairness and safety in the workplace. For example, this government has introduced a new government owned corporations wages and industrial relations

policy, restoring fairness for GOC employees. GOC employees now have employment security reinstated and fairness in industrial relations principles, bargaining and wage increases. The policy provides for wage increases of up to a maximum of three per cent per annum offset by productivity that is equivalent to 50 per cent of the wages increase offer actually made—that is, for a three per cent increase, 1.5 per cent or half of that increase must be funded by productivity, efficiency or savings. In that way, employees receive a fair wage increase and also contribute to the efficient operation of the GOCs. This is a significant improvement on the former government's position which attached harsh and punitive measures and demands to its offers.

This government has also upped the ante in terms of communicating a strong safety message to businesses and the community. The Office of Industrial Relations is rolling out advertising campaigns to deliver work safety messages to a high proportion of the community through television, radio, online channels and newspapers. The aim is always to raise awareness of the importance of work health and safety, electrical safety and effective return-to-work practices. This is about providing advice through educative resources and influencing positive attitudes and behavioural change.

During the estimates session on my portfolio responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, I was particularly disappointed in the level of questioning that the opposition offered up. Instead of a thorough examination of the initiatives of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, we got misguided conspiracy theories about union encouragement and whether it related to our stolen wages reparations policy.

I announced in the budget that we have committed to establish a fund of up to \$21 million to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders affected by former government controls. As I announced the morning of my estimates hearing, we have established a special task force chaired by Mick Gooda, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, to deliver on this commitment. The task force is going to be providing recommendations to government about the development of criteria for the allocation of funds and an assessment process.

During the hearing I spoke about how DATSIP provided whole-of-government leadership, policy, program and service delivery for Indigenous Queenslanders. The department is committed to working across government at all levels with the non-government and private sectors. Importantly, I have asked DATSIP and Treasury to work together closely to leverage Treasury's central agency policy experience and influence across government. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage is a significant issue. That is why I am elevating the role and expectations of DATSIP. I thank the secretariat and the members of the FAC for their examination of the Appropriation Bill.