




Speech By
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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Finance and Administration Committee, Report

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.29 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the estimates process. It is interesting to look at the comments of the committee members, both non-government members and government members, on pages 28, 29, 30, 31 and 32 of the report to see that this year's process, as has already been described by the member for Coomera, the opposition leader, the member for Broadwater and the member for Condamine, was not what this government said it would be. When it was in opposition it said that it would restore the process. The estimates process certainly was not about openness and accountability. We even have criticisms of non-government members asking questions that breached the standing orders. I would say that that is up to the committee chair. If there are concerns about the standing orders being breached, it is obvious and important that the committee chair be aware of the standing orders. We have a booklet containing the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly and pages 23 and 24 of that booklet relate to questions. It is up to the committee chair to make sure that questions do not breach those standing orders.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, that is what we have. We have the government members criticising their own chairs for supposedly allowing questions that breached standing orders. If members look at the comments of the other government members, whether it is to do with Treasury, industrial relations or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, they cut and pasted their responses to non-government comments about the detail provided by the Treasurer. With all the resources they have, they cannot even come up with individual comments in relation to those areas.

When it comes to the budget itself, since the election of the Labor government we have seen a real weakening in Queensland's economic circumstances. The Treasurer opposite is trying to paint a different picture, as he did on estimates day, with those lengthy answers that really consisted of constant criticism of the former government instead of reassuring Queenslanders and the parliament that the promises that he made during the election campaign were, in fact, being delivered in the budget papers.

This year, we can see that economic growth is weaker than previously forecast. It is still leading the nation. That is something that this government inherited. Since the election of this government, there has been a rapid fall in business confidence. The most recent Sensis business survey shows that business confidence in Queensland is the lowest in the country. Of course, we cannot be confident in a Treasurer—and I note that he is in the chamber at the moment and I am sure that he will remember this well—who, to make a political point, one week claimed that Queensland was in a recession and then the next week said, 'We are out of recession.'

The most recent state final demand figures for the June quarter confirmed that we have had, again, two flagging quarters in a row. Those figures show that our domestic economy is lagging behind every other Australian state. Instead of acknowledging the need to do better, in an attempt to downplay her government's economic mismanagement, the Premier misquoted the figures. Even members of the Premier's Business Advisory Council have pleaded with this government to do something about Queensland's economic malaise and its do-nothing approach to economic issues. It is in stark contrast to Labor's attitude towards current social issues.

Since the election of the Palaszczuk government, employment growth forecasts have weakened. The Palaszczuk government's own budget papers predict that unemployment will not fall below 6.5 per cent for at least next two years. As highlighted in the budget papers, all the risks to the economic outlook are to the downside. Budget Paper No. 2 states specifically—

If some of these risks were to eventuate, the forecast recovery in domestic activity and labour market conditions may be slower than currently anticipated.

Given that Labor governments in the decade to 2011-12 increased expenditure by an average of 8.9 per cent per annum, how can we have any confidence in the Treasurer keeping a lid on expenses growth? These are important questions that remain unanswered. These are the vital questions that the opposition would have liked to have put to the Treasurer for a straight answer, not the lengthy answers that he gave at estimates. At the estimates hearing he was defensive and dismissive, as he is today. He refused to release the modelling from the Orion Consulting Network, which was referenced during the 2015 election campaign, that reportedly shows that aggregating the state owned electricity businesses will save \$150 million annually. What does the Treasurer and the government have to hide? Is it because they know that these numbers will not hold up to scrutiny? We are concerned that what has been presented in the budget papers in no way reflects what the Labor Party promised during the 2015 election campaign. In fact, the Treasurer was almost proud of that fact, saying, 'We've done it in a different way.' But, in fact, we have seen Labor's duplicity: more debt, higher fiscal deficits, unemployment not coming down and lower growth.