



Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**


**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2015

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee, Report**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (9.01 pm): I wish to make a few comments on the small business section of the estimates committee hearing, which is dealt with in the committee report. I have to say that the small business section of the hearing only reinforced my view that this minister's small business portfolio is simply an afterthought with no care and no consideration. I suspect that, in terms of small business, this minister's responsibility is to make small businesses even smaller. Ninety-six per cent of businesses in this state are small businesses, yet small business gets only two mentions in Labor's *Jobs now, jobs for the future* budget document. That shows that this is a government that has no appreciation that the engine room of job creation, the engine room of economic development in this state, the engine room of innovation and entrepreneurship, is the small business sector. There are only two mentions of small business in the entire *Jobs now, jobs for the future* budget document.

I contrast that with the many pro small business policies that were implemented by the LNP. We just did not talk about it. We did not spend seven months waiting to form one committee; we got on with the job. What was the first thing we did? We got rid of Labor's \$373 million waste tax. Who introduced the \$373 million waste tax? The member for Ashgrove. It was one of her proudest moments. That is \$373 million on every small restaurant, on every little business, on every hairdresser, on every machine shop, on every car yard.

What did the member for Ashgrove also do? She supported a carbon tax on every business in Australia—an extra \$200-plus on every power bill, on top of all the other expenses. She was part of a government with a treasurer named Andrew Fraser who wrote to the federal minister, Martin Ferguson, and said, 'We're not earning enough money on our power bills. Can you please jack them up a bit more?' That was what Labor was about.

Then what did they do? They increased car registration. So every mother and father who ran a small business was going from paying the lowest car registration in Australia to the highest car registration in Australia. That was what this Minister for Small Business did. She introduced more red tape and more regulation and she increased debt as it headed towards \$80 billion. People ask, 'What does that mean to me?' It meant that if a person was running a small bed and breakfast up in Maleny, such as the one that I visited, and had to pay an onsite wastewater treatment fee, their fee went from \$500 to \$5,000 in one year. Thank you very much, member for Ashgrove, the Minister for Small Business. That is what she did. That is what the member for Ashgrove talks about when she talks about small business.

During the estimates hearing, when we asked the minister to name one red-tape-reduction action that she had taken, do members know what the answer was? Can anyone guess? Just one red-tape-reduction action. None! It has been seven months—since February to the end of July—and there has

not been one action to reduce red tape. We were going to ask who was on the minister's red-tape-reduction panel, which was announced with much fanfare. The Premier was going to announce it. The minister was going to announce it. We thought, 'We haven't heard anything about it for six months.' That is unusual for this government because, if there is a soft story or a good-news sell, it is all over it like a rash. But no, we had not heard anything about it. Do members know what happened? The Thursday before the estimates hearing there was a tweet announcing it.

I said, 'Hang on a second. It is now just after two o'clock in the afternoon.' I think that was when it was. I will stand corrected on the time. I asked, 'Has anyone put it up on the website for the department?' No, not one name of one member of the red-tape-reduction task force had been put on the website for the department. It had been done in such a hurry. When the names were put on there, who were on the red tape advisory committee? There was someone called Kimberley James. My investigations revealed that Kimberley James is a card-carrying member of the Labor Party. There was also a Kathleen Garner, who featured heavily in Labor's pre-election campaign pledges. So there is our Small Business Advisory Council, which was cobbled together at two minutes to midnight after six months of gestation and in the main it consists of party apparatchiks and hacks. It is farcical. Small business receives two mentions in an entire budget. Under this part-time minister, small business will be even smaller.