




Speech By  
**Michael Hart**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (5.02 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to give my contribution to the debate on the budget. It is always good to follow the member for Brisbane Central, our Minister for Employment, especially when she talks about jobs in the regions. In her contribution—short though it was—she mentioned jobs two or three times but did not tell us where those jobs were being generated or how many had been generated. She did not mention how effective any of their plans had been, but was strong on criticism of the wonderful plan that our leader has put forward today.

The minister did suggest that there was not enough on-the-ground coordination and organisation. She is suggesting there is not enough bureaucracy in our plan; not enough public servants to run the whole show. The plan that those opposite have for building jobs in Queensland is to build the Public Service. One needs to look no further than at their own budget papers. I have read them. It would be interesting to see whether the lemmings across the chamber have bothered to read it. I am sure they would have a lot of trouble reading balance sheets and understanding budgets. As I have said many times in this place, most of the members on this side of the House have actually run businesses.

**Mr Elmes:** That would be something new!

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection from the member for Noosa, that would be something new for those opposite: running businesses. Looking at budgets, looking at balance sheets, working out where that next amount of money needs to come from to pay for the payroll that you have to face in the next week or so, they are the tough decisions that people in business need to make. They are the tough decisions that the majority of the people on this side of the House have made before.

On the subject of jobs, it was interesting to see that the Treasurer has put out a new fiscal policy which basically says that the growth of the Public Service will be in line with the growth of the population in Queensland. When one looks at Budget Paper No. 2, page 107, there is a lovely graph that shows what the Public Service was in 2011-12 when we came to government. It was just above the 200,000 mark. After we had been there a little while we got it under control. It came down. But look here! It is back above when we came into government. The prediction shows the growth in population and it shows also the expected growth in full-time employees in the Public Service. Surprisingly enough, the full-time employees in the Public Service is above the population growth all the way along. That goes to 2019-20.

The Treasurer has failed at the first hurdle. He has put out a number of key points in his fiscal policy, but he has, in fact, failed straightaway. This budget is all smoke and mirrors. This government is saying, 'Look over there,' while they have their hands in the pocket that you are not watching at that particular time. Last year we saw the local magician in the House, 'Captain Risky'—who unfortunately is not here tonight—pull a coin out from behind the ear of the Leader of the House. I have dropped my speech and it has gone all over the place. I will have to discard it. I am sure I can survive without it.

**Mr WILLIAMS:** I rise to a point of order: referring to members by their correct title.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Millar): Could you please refer to members by their correct title.

**Mr HART:** My apologies. Captain Risky is actually the Treasurer. I think we all know that.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Burleigh, please.

**Mr HART:** The Treasurer. Those opposite are a bit precious tonight—a bit touchy, one might say. Last year we saw the Treasurer pull a coin out from behind the ear of the Leader of the House and that was his magic trick. What is his magic trick this year? His magic trick this year is to rob \$4 billion from the defined benefit superannuation scheme of Queensland's Public Service. That is a lot of coin from behind the ear. He will be busy for quite a while pulling those coins out.

We have heard from a number of members on this side of the House and I am sure we will hear from many more about how risky that strategy is. However, tonight I flag that what we have not heard from any members opposite is that the money sitting in the Queensland Public Service defined benefit superannuation scheme is held by the Queensland Investment Corporation on behalf of the Queensland government and it is getting a return. One would think that that money would be invested and invested very well. It is not a lazy \$4 billion in cash that is just sitting around, waiting for someone to plunder it. It is not sitting in a hollow log, waiting for a hand to reach in, drag out \$4 billion and throw it up against the wall, as I think the member for Mermaid Beach said. It is not just sitting there. It is tied up in assets. I ask the lemmings across the chamber how they will feel about that? What will the rhetoric be?

We constantly hear from those opposite about asset sales. Tonight everyone who has spoken already has mentioned it. I can assure the House that every member of the Labor Party who is yet to speak will mention exactly the same thing, that is, asset sales. How will they react to the Queensland Investment Corporation selling some assets—\$4 billion worth of assets—in order for the Treasurer's hand to reach into the hollow log and pull out—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr HART:** The Minister for Employment thinks that the QIC has \$4 billion in cash sitting in a bank account somewhere. That is how naive are some of the members across the chamber.

**Ms GRACE:** I rise to a point of order. I take offence. He is completely misconstruing what I have just said and I ask that he withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The minister has asked you to withdraw. Will you withdraw, please.

**Mr HART:** I withdraw. That does not pull back from the fact—and I will not mention the member, again—that the QIC does not have a lazy \$4 billion sitting around. I would be staggered if I am wrong, but I suggest that they do not have a lazy \$4 billion sitting somewhere in an account that someone can reach into, as if it were a hollow log, pull out that \$4 billion and then throw it up against the wall. That is exactly what those opposite will do: they will throw it up against the wall. They will have to sell some assets. Then what will we hear from those opposite? How will they react to the selling of those assets? The QIC owns a number of assets, for instance, shopping centres and buildings. If a shopping centre or a building is sold so that they can come up with \$4 billion, will they worry about that as an asset sale? I suggest they will not, because they are hypocrites when it comes to these sorts of things. It is okay to abuse us and get stuck into us about asset sales, but when they do it, it just does not count.

A couple of weeks ago, it was my pleasure to be appointed the shadow minister for energy, biofuels and water supply. In the past 18 months, the Palaszczuk Labor government has completely failed Queenslanders, whether it is managing the state's finances, growing the economy or with its energy and water policy.

**Mr Butcher:** You lost your speech, remember?

**Mr HART:** I have lost my speech. I will not go back to it. I will move on.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr HART:** I do not need it. It is okay. I can get on without it. Let us look at the SDS for power and water. I know that the minister has been very busy preparing this document. There is nothing in it. It is blank. It surprises me that in the past three weeks he did not have time to meet the owners of the Geiger Group in Toowoomba. For the minister's information, I am told that today that company may have laid off 40 staff.

**Mr Bailey:** There's more to it. You were only told half the story.

**Mr HART:** I would be interested to hear the other half of the story from the minister. The point is that the minister did not have time to meet with that company in Toowoomba. This afternoon they have laid off 40 staff. I am not sure how that fits into the jobs mantra that the government keeps spruiking. They say that they are all for regional jobs, but they have let down those 40 people pretty badly.

What is in the SDS for energy and water? Usually, you get a pretty good idea of what is going on in a department when you look at the 'Discontinued measures' within an SDS. There are a couple of items under 'Discontinued measures', including PowerQ. That was the 30-year electricity plan that former minister McArdle put in place for the state going forward. We are yet to hear about any plan that those opposite may have. They do not have a plan at all. In fact, their plan was to task the newly formed Queensland Productivity Commission with looking at electricity prices in Queensland. It has done that and has produced a draft plan. However, the government has thrown out all of its ideas. They did not like any of those ideas, so now it has no plans.

The final determination has now been handed to the minister, but the minister is keeping it a secret. Maybe he is sharing it with his ministerial colleagues, but certainly he is not sharing it with the people of Queensland. The people of Queensland are the ones who have to pay their electricity bills, but they are not to find out what the suggestions might be to decrease those electricity bills. It would be fantastic if the minister had that conversation with the people of Queensland and gave them the opportunity to see what great plans he may have, apart from his 50 per cent renewable energy policy. We have not yet found out how that will be paid for. It is not in the budget. There is no money in the budget for the 50 per cent renewable energy plan that they are coming up with. The last costing I saw on it was about \$10.5 billion or \$11 billion, but there is no money in the budget—

**A government member:** Which figure is it, Michael? Tell us.

**Mr HART:** Let us make it \$10.6 billion. Is that an accurate figure? The minister will remember that I do not have my speech anymore, because I dropped it. Let us say \$10.6 billion, but there is no money in the budget for it. Luckily, there is also no mention of a carbon tax, although we have heard a bit about that in the chamber in the past few weeks. We were lucky that the Premier stood here and told us that there would be no carbon tax under a government that she leads. We have heard that story before, have we not? Do members remember that story? A prime minister said that, but a short time later it was exactly what we saw. Therefore, it is a worry when the Premier of this state says the same thing. Are we likely to see it in the future? That is what worries me.

**A government member:** You are a worrier, Michael.

**Mr HART:** I take that interjection. While we have an incompetent Labor government that has no idea how to form a budget and an incompetent minister for energy and water who cannot meet with constituents or help with job numbers, of course I worry. I worry about the future that my children may have. I worry about whether they will have the opportunity to buy a house like I did quite a few years ago. They are now reaching an age when they will need to buy houses. It is getting more and more difficult for them. The Labor government can waffle on all they like about first home buyers grants, but they are the ones with the history of axing those sorts of programs. We brought it back in. Yes, they have boosted it in this budget, but they have boosted it for only 12 months.

On the other hand they have introduced a big tax on foreigners. Apparently foreigners are New Zealanders who live on the Gold Coast. As members would know we have quite a few New Zealanders—foreigners, apparently—who are buying properties on the Gold Coast. They will be subjected to that \$10,000 impost on a \$300,000 unit or a \$300,000 house that they buy.

My understanding from the Treasurer's speech and from what has been stated in this House is that that plan does not last for 12 months but goes on and on. Whilst the first home buyers grant boost lasts for 12 months that tax continues—that broken promise of the Labor Party that there will be no new taxes on anybody in Queensland, that technicality that we are not taxing Queenslanders but we are taxing everybody else into this state.

That tax on New Zealanders on the Gold Coast is going to have a detrimental effect on real estate on the Gold Coast. I am already hearing from real estate agents from my patch on the Gold Coast—I have quite a few real estate agents in my electorate—that they are worried about what is going to happen in the future.

In my speech on the budget last year I talked about the amount of money that was shifted to our GOCs. I think it was about \$4 billion. In 2017-18 the LNP had forecast total debt to reach something like \$79.9 billion. Those opposite have taken \$4 billion and shifted it to GOCs. They took a holiday on making superannuation payments in the last budget. They are now robbing \$4 billion from the defined benefits superannuation scheme. Some \$2 billion of that is to be used to write down debt. Debt is still forecast to be only \$2 billion less in 2017-18.

Approximately \$4½ billion to \$5 billion has vanished off the face of the earth. It has disappeared. It is another magic trick from the Treasurer. It is one of his best, but it will be to the detriment of all people in Queensland. The people of Queensland will remember this, do not worry about that.

*(Time expired)*