




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.32 pm): It is yet again a pleasure to follow the member for Stretton, who stakes his claim for the Treasurer's position with undoubted calm and dispassion and a complete absence of relevance and regard to the facts of the matter. The member for Stretton takes the gold medal for saying 'I object' or calling for a point of order the most in the estimates committee hearing. The member for Stretton continually sought to reference pages in the SDS—a practice that is not only unnecessary but also garnered to waste the time of the committee that is charged with dealing with the estimates. Notwithstanding the herculean efforts of the member for Sunnybank in terms of trying to restrain the member for Stretton, he still managed to find out if there were points of order or references to the SDS during the entire process.

The Palaszczuk government's second budget is again a budget of raids, rip-offs and writedowns. It is a budget that is based on short-sighted hollow-log raids instead of outlining a clear economic vision for Queensland and a plan to strengthen the state's financial position. Indeed, the shadow Treasurer will no doubt refer to the questions and the responses that he received in respect to the consideration of the appropriation by the Treasurer.

The budget continues to see unemployment remaining above six per cent. It continues to see declining business investment. It continues Labor's long record of fiscal deficits, with debt continuing to increase towards \$80 billion and government expenses growing at almost four times the rate of inflation. Those are statistics and figures that, under this Labor government, should have Queenslanders shaking in their boots—under the self-styled Captain Risky of the Queensland budget and of treasurers Australia wide.

The Premier's lacklustre performance at the estimates hearing also instilled no confidence that she was aware of what was going on in the budget handed down by the Treasurer. It was clear that the Premier had no idea what is happening with her individual ministers and with individual departments. We saw that again this morning.

In terms of workforce statistics, following a media article and following consistent questioning by the opposition, the Premier was shamed into releasing long overdue quarterly workforce statistics. We were going to ask the Premier a number of questions about the delivery of those workforce statistics, which miraculously appeared on the morning of estimates. They were published the night before the committee hearings, but the figures were not available online until four o'clock that afternoon. The March quarter figures were delivered only at some stage in July—months after they were due to be provided to enable people to make a proper assessment of what this government is doing.

The statistics show that more than 4,000 full-time-equivalent positions were created in the Public Service in just one quarter—in just one quarter. As highlighted in the budget pages for 2015-16, the Public Service grew by 4,000 FTEs more than originally budgeted. There are 8,000 more public servants on the payroll. In those circumstances it was reasonable to ask: what is the benefit to

Queenslanders? What is the improvement in delivery of services? I asked the Premier a number of questions in relation to Health and in relation to Education and not once was the Premier able to point to any improvement in the delivery of the services. Although Queensland has lost more than 20,000 full-time jobs over the last 12 months, those jobs that have been created are in the Public Service. The Premier still struggles to understand the necessity to control expenses and to have a Public Service that is the right size to deliver the services that Queenslanders need and can afford.

There are further questions about the merit based selection process—the Premier’s much vaunted principle—and the appointment of Rachel Hunter, who did not go through that merit based selection process. We find that, 18 months into the job, the Public Service Commissioner has himself not been through a merit based selection process. This commitment has not been completed and rings hollow, as do many other of Labor’s promises.

There were concerning statistics about child safety and, despite obvious failings, the failure of the commissioner to undertake a review of the child safety department. This budget continues the Palaszczuk government’s record of not delivering for Queenslanders. Only the LNP can get Queensland moving again.