




Speech By  
**Tracy Davis**

**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

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

 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (4.48 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the appropriation bills for 2016. In the seven years that I have been a member of parliament I have never witnessed a Treasurer deliver a budget with such a mind-numbing lack of enthusiasm than the member for Mulgrave. Even Andrew Fraser had a crack at being up-beat when he delivered his asset sales budget. Government members looked like they would rather have been anywhere else but in this House when the budget was delivered—heads down, no supportive ‘hear, hears’, nothing. Why? Because they knew that raiding \$4 billion of the state’s public servant superannuation fund was a very risky business—not only the financial risk but that public servants would not like it. The government members knew that putting their sticky fingers on public servants’ retirement money was not going to be popular with the very people this government claims to champion. As the shadow Treasurer stated, and this has been echoed by my LNP colleagues, this is a budget of raids, rip-offs and writedowns.

This second budget of the Palaszczuk Labor government once again fails families in the Aspley electorate. It fails to address issues of importance to people living in suburbs such as Aspley, Cherside West, Carseldine, Bald Hills and Bridgeman Downs. The Aspley electorate is the northern gateway to the city of Brisbane and the people of my electorate are very proud of that status. However, being the northern gateway comes with increasing challenges, particularly when it comes to road infrastructure. With housing developments continuing to expand northbound in Moreton shire and through to the Sunshine Coast, over 70,000 cars travel along Gympie Road daily. Traffic can bank back for several kilometres as commuters from those areas make their way into Brisbane. Peak hour is horrific. The intersection of Beams and Gympie roads is akin to a car park. The frustration of motorists is high and the impact on local traffic is significant. In fact, even beyond normal peak hour periods, congestion starts to build as early as two o’clock in the afternoon for commuters travelling north.

The residents of Carseldine know this issue only too well. After lobbying my local TMR regional officers, there is some money to have a look at the issue—and I am pleased about that. I encourage the Minister for Main Roads to make a visit to the northern suburbs so that he can see the traffic mess firsthand. As the minister will be stuck in traffic for a very long time, he can perhaps have a little bit of a sleep at the wheel because, after all, that is what his government does best. While he is at it, he could have a look at the Linkfield Road overpass at Bald Hills. He could always stop playing politics with the installation of sound barriers along Gympie Road at Carseldine. The Aspley electorate is also—

**Mr BAILEY:** I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at that comment about the politicisation of the sound barrier program. That is not the case. I find it personally offensive. That is a very tight and clear point. I am personally offended and I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Linard): The minister has raised a point of order. I did not hear the comment, but the convention is that, as he has said that he found it personally offensive, I ask the member—

**Ms Davis** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member has raised a point of order and said that he found the comment personally offensive. Member for Aspley, I did not hear it. Can you withdraw?

**Ms DAVIS:** I withdraw. The Aspley electorate is home to outstanding school communities, great students, great principals and teachers and very hardworking P&Cs. It was disappointing to find that, again, no money had been allocated to Aspley State High School to upgrade its school hall—a school hall that is also used by the broader community. At the last election, the LNP committed funding to refurbish the kitchen and bathroom amenities and install an extractive cooling system so that students can be more comfortable, particularly during the sweltering heat of a Brisbane summer. This education minister did not feel inclined to do the same. The school community is not asking for a flashy upgrade or a new performing arts centre, they just want a hall that is suitable for their needs. Once again, Labor has cast aside the Aspley electorate.

The Treasurer handed out a glossy brochure that spruiked innovation, investment and infrastructure. I have a couple of words that more accurately describe this budget and how this government feels about the people of the Aspley electorate. They also begin with the letter I: ignorance and indifference—ignorant to the aspirations of the people of the Aspley electorate and indifferent to the challenges faced by the people of the Aspley electorate. The Treasurer said that the government has replaced confrontation with consultation, but the truth is that it has replaced consultation with complacency.

In his reply, the Leader of the Opposition rightly highlighted the many budget fails. He also announced the LNP blueprint to get young people working. The Leader of the Opposition reminded the government of its responsibility to the people of Queensland and I think it is worthy to remind the Labor government of those responsibilities again. Governments must deliver public services efficiently and fairly. Governments must use taxpayers' money wisely. Governments should not borrow money unless there is certainty that there is a return to the Queensland taxpayer from that investment. Governments should stay out of the way of the private sector generating jobs and wealth and raising living standards and governments should also lower business costs to promote international competitiveness so that business can employ more people.

This budget is being seen by Queenslanders as a major disappointment, because they wanted to see real and significant opportunities ahead. Instead, this budget has not inspired confidence, either in individuals or in business. It is a budget that does not offer real economic reform. In fact, it lacks reform and it lacks vision. This is not a budget that offers tax relief for Queensland families. This is another Labor budget of smoke and mirrors—a budget built on a house of cards, a budget designed to tax high, spend high, and shuffle the deckchairs. It is a budget that is built on the Treasurer and the Premier keeping their fingers crossed in the hope of something, in the hope of anything, in the hope that a miracle will happen to save the day.

If this were a budget for jobs, then why is unemployment continuing to creep up? If this is supposedly a budget for infrastructure, why is the spending on key infrastructure at such low levels? How can Labor justify a budget that is supposedly fiscally responsible when public sector spending is increasing at rates well over the rate of inflation? This is a Labor government that would rather rob the earnings of the public sector superannuation fund than develop a long-term economic plan. Despite promising to pay down debt, this year's budget shows overall debt increasing. As I said previously, this budget delivers massive blowouts in public sector wages owing to massive increases in staff.

On the government's own figures, despite all the so-called jobs that it has claimed to have created, unemployment has risen. The cruellest part of this budget is the hit on hardworking Queensland families—the huge hit they will take with the excessive hike in fees and charges across-the-board. This year's budget exposes once more the length of the tricky economics and smoke and mirrors that this Labor government is willing to go to in an attempt to shuffle the debt problem it created.

When Labor promised to pay down debt before the election, I do not think that any Queenslanders could have imagined that it would be by raiding the profits of our state pension fund. I will speak more to that issue shortly. Let me say this: if we do not tackle the debt issue it will continue to spiral out of control and cripple our ability to grow into the future. It will cripple opportunities for our families and our children to achieve what they aspire to achieve. Make no mistake: this is a budget that promised to pay down debt, but the reality for our families and for our children is that the total debt is still heading towards \$80 billion.

I would like to speak specifically to Labor's raid on the state pension fund. Recently, the opposition leader pointed out that, as the world economy continues its gradual recovery from the global financial crisis, superannuation funds around the world are working overtime to protect their capital. Our super funds also battle against the pressure of extremely low interest rates. Despite all of these challenges facing the superannuation sector, this Labor government in Queensland has made the decision to rob the capital of the state's defined benefit superannuation fund to fill its budget black hole. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out—and I agree—this is a move that opens the state's finances to disastrous implications for Queensland.

Alarming, this year's raid comes on the back of a similar raid last year, which involved the Labor government stripping \$3.4 billion out of the long service leave funding pool reserve. Despite advice from Wayne Cannon, the State Actuary, that there is a one-in-five chance of an accrued deficit in the QSuper defined benefit scheme, Treasurer Curtis Pitt still decided to take \$4 billion from the fund. This action should ring alarm bells, particularly if this government intends to do the same next year. Make no mistake: if there are future downturns in the stock market, that will leave the fund exposed. This reckless action means for future governments that, regardless of the state's financial position into the future, we could be forced to top up the defined benefit fund.

The Queensland Teachers' Union made some comments about the scheme, as this decision could adversely impact its members. The Queensland Teachers' Union said that it would 'call-out any actions by the state that would jeopardise this unique feature of the QSuper defined benefit scheme' and that 'government must ensure that all benefits remain guaranteed until the last member of the fund has retired'.

Given that the Premier and the Treasurer refuse to confirm that the fund would be topped up should things go pear-shaped, the Queensland Teachers' Union should be a bit worried and the union should get mobilised. The State Actuary said there were risks in the plan and the government would need to top up the fund if the economy or markets tanked even if it might not be in a strong financial position to do so. This would be worrying to all Queenslanders, particularly if the top-up means more taxes, fees and charges or reduced services in areas like health and education.

This week in the *Australian Financial Review*, respected financial reporter Mark Ludlow wrote—

Pitt will plunder \$10 billion in dividends and tax equivalent payments from the energy, port and water assets to help him pay down the general government sector debt.

Ludlow also wrote—

Under the guidance of former federal Treasury official Jim Murphy, he's even making the state-owned company keep their \$1.2 billion in excess cash in Queensland Treasury's coffers so they can skim the interest earned.

This is a sleight of hand that is robbing the state owned companies of the ability to retain their own interest earned. This is a tricky accounting move that exposes the lack of a real economic plan. We have to challenge this Labor government. How long can it keep taking and taking and taking before there is nothing left to take?

I am very privileged to be the shadow minister for education. The education of our children should always be a priority. We know that a good education is one of the most important formative experiences of our lives. We know that access to a world-class education can set our children and young people on a journey to realise their personal and professional potential. We know that the net gain from the quality education of our children—the improvement in literacy and numeracy that is needed—adds in a true and meaningful way to long-term economic benefit to our state.

When the LNP was elected in 2012 we set about renewing the focus on student outcomes. For decades Queensland schools had languished at the bottom of the NAPLAN tables, schools had fallen into disrepair and principals were struggling to navigate the bureaucracy to ensure discipline was maintained in the classroom. Prior to that, Labor's answer was to throw money at the system, but the reality was that the increasing expenditure did not equate to increased educational outcomes for our students.

It is important that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and transparently with clear evidence of a return on investment and it is no different when it comes to education. That is what our children deserve. In government we invested in education. We introduced independent public schools. The interest right across Queensland to transition to an IPS was stunning—and why? Because the IPS model empowered principals and gave school communities the capacity to respond to the school's needs at a local level not bureaucratic direction via Education House. A significant consequence of the success of independent public schools was increases in enrolment numbers back into the state school system which, under Labor, were in decline.

A part of providing a quality education is planning for future school infrastructure across all schooling sectors. The LNP understands the importance of planning and in government we implemented the Schools Planning Commission to map growth areas and subsequent demand for new schools across Queensland. The role of the commission was to make strategic recommendations on initiatives that would streamline and coordinate processes for the planning of schools in Queensland, drawing on evidence, expertise and consultation with key stakeholders. The Schools Planning Commission projected that in the next 15 years 39 to 47 new primary schools and 20 to 24 new secondary schools would be needed to keep up with growth demand in Queensland. This budget provides for only six new schools over four years—only six new schools—when the Schools Planning Commission clearly indicated that we would need significant more numbers than that.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is not thinking about planning for the future. If schools are not built where there are students needing classrooms where are they going to learn? Are we back to overcrowded classrooms and children packed into demountables like sardines? The reality is that the LNP delivered 11 new schools, schools that the Minister for Education is happy to cut the ribbon at and have her photograph taken at. She seems uninclined to project into the future. She needs to get her planning shoes on quick and fast. If the minister cannot manage to do this then perhaps she might explain to Queensland why this government puts such a low priority on forward planning for our new schools.

The minister has talked much about her focus on science, technology, engineering and maths, the STEM subjects in our schools, and how vitally important this is so that children are prepared for the jobs of the future. I agree. On a matter so important to the minister there is an investment of only \$3.3 million of new funding over the forwards going into the classroom into the STEM area in an annual budget of around \$12 billion. I question how much of a priority this really is for the minister.

I have talked about the students, but, of course, having quality teachers in front of a classroom is essential. Queensland has great teachers. To support them, when in government we delivered the Great Teachers = Great Results initiative. This initiative rewarded high performing teachers and positioned high performing teachers where they were needed the most. Importantly, it enabled school leaders and teachers to drive outcomes for students. When I am chatting to parents of students they tell me overwhelmingly that the most important things are for their children to be happy at school. That is No. 1. They also want them to receive an education that is responsive to their child's needs and capabilities and they also want to have a bit of a say on how that happens. They do not tell me they want a fancy overcrowded curriculum. What they want is an education that provides their children with the tools to reach their potential and provide a solid foundation for their future. Teachers work hard every day to respond to those aspirations. The minister needs to step up and do the same.

I would like to acknowledge here in the House the former minister for education, the member for Surfers Paradise, who did an outstanding job in the three years that he had leadership of education in this state. It moved forward and we are in a much better position now than what we found ourselves in prior to coming into government.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition announced the LNP's plan to create jobs for up to 23,000 young Queenslanders through the Get Queensland Working initiative. Get Queensland Working encourages apprentices to finish their training and to provide incentives to employers to train and retain workers. Since January last year 21,300 young Queenslanders have lost their jobs and things are not set to improve under this Labor government. Additionally, he announced Tools for Tradies, which is a \$10 million initiative which will provide \$500 towards new tools for apprentices upon completion of their training. Our young people wherever they live across our great state deserve the political resolve to create real employment opportunities for them. They do not want a government to put them in the too-hard basket. How must young people feel when the minister for employment throws her hands in the air and says there is not much you can change to address youth unemployment. The LNP will not give up on young people in Queensland. They are our future.

Our taxpayers, our industries, our hardworking men and women, our families, our seniors and our children deserve much better than a budget based on the magic pudding economics that this government is dishing up. This is a true Labor budget—which means it is a truly risky budget. Only the LNP can deliver the conditions needed to instil business confidence and jobs growth for the benefit of all Queenslanders. Only the LNP has the experience and vision for this great state to achieve its full potential.