




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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### **STATE PENALTIES ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (10.09 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to debate on the State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Bill 2017. Members of the House who have followed, like me, *Game of Thrones* will know that the Lannisters always pay their debts. For the vast majority of Queenslanders, that is also the case. Unfortunately, there are a number who owe, in some cases, a considerable amount of money to the state government. This bill, the State Penalties Enforcement Amendment Bill or SPER bill, seeks to make a number of changes to the scheme tasked with recouping debts owed to the state.

As I said, most Queenslanders do pay their fees or fines as they occur, whether it is a parking ticket, a speeding fine, a toll or a charge which is court ordered. We do understand that, for some, there is a need for SPER to have flexibility to case manage, particularly those under extreme financial hardship or those with extraordinary circumstances, and there are already a number of non-financial means of settling that debt contained within the SPER act at the discretion of SPER to utilise. As the member for Indooroopilly outlined, we have serious concerns about the efficacy of the proposed work and development orders in terms of how they will be paid and what happens to the debt owed to the creditors like councils that is ultimately written off by SPER as a result. As such, the member for Indooroopilly will be moving amendments accordingly.

I want to quickly talk about the process of recovering unpaid tolls since this is an issue of considerable concern in the broader community that relates to the portfolio I hold as shadow minister for transport and main roads. Motorists have three days to pay a toll. If that does not happen, an invoice is issued—in this case, by Transurban. If that is not paid within 14 days, a demand notice is issued—again by Transurban or go via—and if that is not paid the toll is referred to the Department of Transport and Main Roads to recover. At the point it is referred to Transport and Main Roads, the tolling company waives any right to receive the original toll. It then goes to SPER once the offender refuses to pay the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Let me make it clear to all members of this House and to members of the public, as a number of my colleagues have done: when the Treasurer and the Minister for Main Roads want to lay blame on anyone but themselves for the state of SPER, remember that this is a legacy scheme of successive Labor governments. SPER was established in 2000 by the Beattie Labor government and the arrangements for toll roads—that process I just outlined where at some point the tolling company can transfer the debt to the government through TMR and on to SPER—were signed off in a road franchise agreement settled in 2011 under the then Bligh Labor government just before it privatised Queensland Motorways. Who was the transport minister at the time? That would have been the Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk.

Any increase in referrals of unpaid fines during the time the LNP was in government was a genuine attempt to clear a backlog that was allowed to develop under the previous government, with fines recovered under the same powers that had been in place since 2011. Now amounts owed to SPER have been allowed to vastly exceed \$1 billion under this Palaszczuk Labor government. Some

measures in this bill will be helpful in tackling this mountain of debt, but in the interests of maintaining the integrity of the system we have serious concerns about the proposed work and development orders, and that is why I will be supporting the amendments moved by the shadow Treasurer.