




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 8 August 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (3.22 pm): Continuing on the avian theme today, the member for Kawana is a great example of going from a rooster to a feather duster. Just to pick up on a couple of the points made by the member for Kawana, there is no statistical division which deals with cherry-picking. If there were, he would be the only person in it, maybe along with the member for Indooroopilly. Let us look at the figures. When we came to office Ipswich was at 17.6 per cent unemployment. Youth unemployment is now down to 12.7 per cent. In Brisbane North it was at 13.4 per cent and is now down to 10.8 per cent. In Moreton Bay North the unemployment rate was 16.7 per cent and it is now down to 13.2 per cent. On the Gold Coast, the unemployment rate was at 14.6 per cent and is now down to 10.2 per cent. In Cairns the rate is down from 21.5 per cent to 17.2 per cent. This really is a cheap shot by those opposite. I do not know how they can come into this place and talk about unemployment with a straight face.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Minister for Industrial Relations, member for Kawana, would you please cease your interjections and conversations across the chamber.

Mr PITT: I also noted that in today's debate the Leader of the Opposition again talked about debt levels, as did the shadow Treasurer. The hypocrisy alarm really should be going off. The member for Clayfield boasted in his first budget about getting non-financial public sector debt down to just \$82 billion by 2014-15. He said this amount would show that debt was 'stabilised'. Not long after that the state was given a negative ratings outlook by Moody's credit rating agency. It looks like we have cleaned up the LNP's economic mess on a number of fronts. We have the stable rating back under Moody's, check, and reduced debt to a sustainable manageable level, check. In 2017-18 general government sector debt is expected to be more than \$14 billion lower than was forecast in the former treasurer's last budget in 2014-15 and non-financial public sector debt, which includes government owned businesses, is expected to be \$10 billion lower than they forecast.

The member for Clayfield boasted about how debt reached \$82 billion two years ago and that it was stabilised. Now, five years later, he says \$81 billion in debt is a problem. The member for Clayfield only talks about debt because he wants to scare Queenslanders again into a fire sale of our income-generating assets. That is the only reason those opposite go there.

Three weeks ago the Finance and Administration Committee scrutinised my portfolio areas of Trade as well as Treasury and Investment as part of the overall analysis of our budget. All three budgets are built on a responsible and disciplined economic plan. In less than three years our plan has strengthened business confidence, restored front-line services and helped people get back to work—77,300 net new jobs have been created since 2015 when we came into office. This third budget aims to create even more. Queenslanders have every reason to be optimistic as our state economy continues

to be heading in the right direction. Jobs are up. Growth is up. Debt is down. Since estimates we have seen confidence in Queensland's economy continue to grow. Today we saw the NAB Monthly Business Survey for July 2017, which puts our trend business confidence as the highest amongst all states in Australia—again—at plus 13. For 29 out of the past 31 months Queensland has had the highest or second highest trend business confidence of all states in Australia.

Despite the strong economy and the crucial role the state budget has played in this success, the opposition again comes to estimates with little preparation attacking the government's strong economic record while consistently failing to outline any kind of alternative economic plan. The Debt Action Plan has proven to be a success and I have talked about those debt reduction levels. In the 2016-17 budget we announced plans to repatriate \$4 billion from the defined benefits scheme, which was overfunded, and put \$2 billion towards job-creating infrastructure projects and a further \$2 billion to retiring debt across the forward estimates.

That was the last budget. That was not the 2017-18 budget. The member for Indooroopilly spent so long talking about last year's budget that I was surprised if he had done any work in preparation for this budget. There will be no impact on members of the defined benefits scheme. I should not have to come into the House again to allay people's fears, but ultimately it is reckless scaremongering from those opposite. Members of that scheme know that the government guarantees it every step of the way. It is absolute nonsense being peddled by the member for Indooroopilly. I would say he should know better, but I do not think he does.

On 4 May we saw the review of the defined benefits scheme as at 30 June 2016. It found that the scheme remains in a very strong and healthy position, with Queensland unique among Australian jurisdictions in fully funding our defined benefit scheme. Compared to the super liabilities of other states we are in a very, very healthy position indeed.

Those opposite also attacked our state owned power generators, the very generators that the member for Clayfield was focused on making look as profitable as possible in preparation to sell them off. We know that they were very hands-off in government. They were all about fattening them up for sale, allowing them to run riot particularly around the wholesale electricity price. The strong financial performance of the state owned assets has allowed us to invest in new infrastructure projects. I am very pleased with the budget as it stands.