




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; BETTING TAX BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (12.18 pm): I begin my contribution on this important debate on the state budget by saying that as dreary, as flat and as forgettable as the member for Clayfield's speech was last year, it stands as a shining beacon of Lincolnesque eloquence compared to the tirade of negativity we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition. It may not be the end, but it is the beginning of the end of her leadership. Based on past performance, we fully expected the Leader of the Opposition to drop the ball, but we were just hoping this time she might at least find the playing field. No matter what else one can say about the Leader of the Opposition, in particular what else she can be accused of, one certainly cannot accuse her of being consistent.

Her policy about-face on renewable energy has elevated the political backflip to an Olympic sport in which she would get the gold medal in every division in every event. The absolute temerity of it is breathtaking. To declare today in this House that they would compel the electricity generators they wanted to sell to invest in renewable energy they have never supported is a monumental piece of hypocrisy, even by the low standards of the LNP. It is not just LNP nonsense; it is LNP nonsense on stilts. The Leader of the Opposition saying that she supports renewable energy is like Pauline Hanson saying that she leads a united and unified Senate team in Canberra. It is simply unbelievable.

Today was supposed to be the big day, the chance for the Leader of the Opposition to establish her credentials as the alternative premier of an LNP alternative government. The Leader of the Opposition had a series of tests to pass and she failed each and every one of them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Order! There is too much noise in the chamber. To those who are leaving the chamber, could you leave quietly. To those who are having conversations in the chamber, could you take them outside please.

Mr DICK: It is no wonder the LNP does not want to hear this. The Leader of the Opposition complained of debt but neglected to mention that it increased under the LNP. Debt in this state increased under the LNP and is today lower than what they predicted it would be under their policies in their last budget. Under the LNP, debt was projected to hit over \$82 billion. When? In the financial year that is just about to pass—2017-18. They are complaining about \$83 billion of debt but they were going to hit that this financial year. Our debt has stabilised. Our borrowings have stabilised. Why? It is because of the prudent fiscal management of the Labor government.

If they are so worried about debt—and I look forward to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Treasurer, reporting on this—what are they going to say about the Australian government debt? What are they going to say about Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison's debt? If they are so worried about debt being 30 per cent of national gross domestic product, let us hear them criticise Malcolm Turnbull. I will tell you one thing they will not do, and that is criticise the Turnbull government on their gross fiscal mismanagement.

The Leader of the Opposition complained about unemployment but neglected to mention that unemployment is today lower than when they left office. She complained about taxation but made no mention about how she was going to replace the revenue. She says she wants lower taxes and lower debt. If you want lower taxes and lower debt, how do you get the money? How are you going to fund the second M1, the Bruce Highway upgrades, the traffic bottlenecks they say they are going to fix or the new dams? Where is the money coming from for the \$2 billion to air-condition state schools in Queensland alone, plus the money that they will now commit to the non-state sector because the Leader of the Opposition said they will air-condition every school, not just state schools? Where is the money coming from?

Let me give the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition a lesson in government finance 101. If you are not going to raise taxes, there is only one road you can go down. You can cut services, cut jobs and sell assets. That is the only alternative. I say to the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition: show me the money.

The Leader of the Opposition has never apologised for what she did to Queensland when she on her own admission was sitting around the CBRC table as the assistant minister. She was there. She was complicit in every single decision they made and so was the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who was a minister in that government. They can talk about the health system as much as they like, but there is one apology they have never made. They have never made an apology for the fiscal decisions they made in the CBRC, ruining the lives of thousands of Queenslanders.

When it comes to health, they have never apologised to the Barrett families. I will never, ever accept any criticism from the LNP until they apologise to the families whose lives they destroyed by their decision to close the Barrett Adolescent Centre against advice that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had as a cabinet minister not to close that centre without a replacement. The Labor government will never be criticised by the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or any of those members opposite on health until they right the wrongs of the past.

All we got from the Leader of the Opposition was thought bubbles—thought bubbles on energy, thought bubbles on health, thought bubbles on education. In our system the Leader of the Opposition relies on her parliamentary team and most particularly on her deputy. Anyone who heard the member for Everton's train wreck interview on ABC Radio this morning would have further insight into why the opposition is in such disarray. Having provided more sidesteps than a Billy Slater kick return, the member for Everton pressed on with the genius LNP strategy, finally settling on this piece of genius: 'For the LNP to deliver a plan to deal with debt would be irresponsible and irrelevant.' That pretty much sums up the performance of the shadow Treasurer and the LNP in its entirety—entirely irresponsible and entirely irrelevant. I can assure the member for Everton that I will be reminding him about that tragic train wreck of an interview for the rest of his time as the shadow Treasurer. When the member for Clayfield was in charge, I said about the LNP that they played follow the leader and it was like walking in a circle, but at least a circle has a shape.

Let us look at infrastructure. The Leader of the Opposition has criticised our infrastructure underspend. She has criticised our investment in infrastructure. I quote Campbell Newman, who said about the Leader of the Opposition, that this is more 'Populist, retrograde nonsense from @DebFrecklington who has never delivered any infrastructure.' It is populist nonsense what she has put in this House. She did not even believe it. What about the lack of energy and enthusiasm? I will say this about the Leader of the Opposition: she has no ticker. She does not have the ticker to lead the opposition and she does not have the ticker to lead the state.

What a contrast it is between the absolute incoherence of the LNP and the Palaszczuk government and what we are delivering—a detailed and comprehensive financial blueprint for our state, set out by the Treasurer on Tuesday. A budget is more than numbers on a spreadsheet, more than a financial blueprint, more than a balance sheet for the state, more than a record of revenue and expenditure, more than a plan and more than a program. That goes for each and every one that we have been delivering as a government.

At its heart a budget is a statement of intent and a declaration of values, the exposition of a government's character through an expression of its policies and priorities. Framed, as this budget so clearly is, by adherence to the principles of fiscal rectitude, it nonetheless promotes the agenda of a government that is committed to investing in the people of Queensland. It is a Labor budget, founded on Labor principles, driven by Labor ideals—a budget where we talk about numbers but always think about people. It is a budget that promotes our commitment to inclusiveness and shared opportunity, to building an economy where no-one is left behind, to tackling disadvantage and inequity by investing in the social capital that improves the lives of Queenslanders through the delivery of accessible and affordable services and the provision of infrastructure that enhances public amenity and economic productivity in Queensland.

There is probably no greater distinction between the government and the opposition than in the areas of health and education. To this side of the House, they are central to the purpose of government, critical in driving future prosperity and the wellbeing of Queenslanders. To those opposite, they are too often seen as merely burdens on the budget, targets too tempting to ignore when they default to their instinct, which is always to cut, sack and sell. That, more than anything else, displays the absolute poverty of their vision and their dogmatic allegiance to the kind of economic nihilism articulated in their discredited Commission of Audit—they have never apologised for that—that finds virtue in the retreat of government from the economy which we have heard. They do not want to have business attraction funds, retreating from the economy. 'Let the market decide' is and always has been their position: 'Let's not be active. Let's not be engaged. Let the market decide and leave the people behind.'

They want to support tax cuts for the one per cent. Well, let them be the voice for the one percenters in this parliament. The Labor government will be the voice of the 99 per cent, and we always will be. Their politics is a toxic formula drawn from the rancid practices of austerity which do little more than drain confidence and promote hardship. It ignores the fact that the individual life represents the touchstone of social value and that all the services and instrumentalities of the state exist for the betterment of individuals. They betray the disadvantaged who disproportionately rely on government services to sustain their material sufficiency necessary to live a dignified life.

Earlier in this debate the member for Everton called out to me, 'Do you know where Woodridge State High School is?' I certainly do. It is the most hardworking Queensland community that I am proud to support in this state. He wanted to sell a school in his electorate. We will back schools every day of the week. Does he know where Everton High is? When he was the minister for public works he put up a sign at Everton High that said 'For sale'. That is what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did.

What a pathetic effort by the member for Nanango today. What a genuinely pathetic effort. She knows that her time is passing. We heard hollow claims of corruption and criminality in government which within hours she could not support or substantiate. She could not put anything in the public domain. If there was ever a political leader who wanted a cheap headline but was hollow and meaningless in their commitment to public office in this state it is the Leader of the Opposition.

No matter how bitter the lesson, no matter how stern the rebuke by Queenslanders, no matter how clear the rejection by the Queensland electorate, the LNP will never ever learn. The LNP are the scorpion on the back of the Queensland frog—unable to resist the impulse to sting because it is fundamentally in their nature. When they were in government they went to war with doctors, nurses, teachers, the environmental movement, scientists, judges, lawyers, public servants and, finally, with each other. It is a war which, if the recent exchanges between the Leader of the Opposition and her former leader, the person she admired so much, Campbell Newman, is anything to go by, continues unabated.

The contrast between this government and those opposite—between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition—could not be more stark. Where the Leader of the Opposition has failed the test, the Premier has on each occasion lifted the bar promising to govern for all Queenslanders and promising to deliver for all Queenslanders. That is exactly what the Premier and the Deputy Premier and Treasurer have done for our state.

It was a very dreary morning for those of us in the government to have to listen to the Leader of the Opposition in this debate. There is so much in this budget that will drive our state forward—drive forward economic growth, drive forward employment, drive forward opportunity and optimism for our state. It is a budget of fairness. It is a budget that supports a fair go. It delivers opportunity, vision and hope for our state. It sets out a clear path of how we will deal with the growth that is the dividend of our success and a pathway to building a better Queensland. It is a budget that is forward looking and financially responsible. I commend the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. I commend the Premier and I commend our government, and I support this state budget.