




Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (2.59 pm): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill which was presented by the Treasurer on Tuesday. This is a very disappointing budget both for the people of my own electorate of Southern Downs and also for people throughout Queensland. There is certainly nothing at all in it for the people of Southern Downs, other than the promise of new and higher taxes. Being new in this House, I perhaps too optimistically thought there might be some compensation for the people of Southern Downs buried deep in the documents so that we would get something back for the huge amount we have been slugged in taxes. I eagerly immersed myself in the budget documents, with eyes peeled, looking for investments that we need—like fixing the Eight Mile intersection at Warwick, funding for the Accommodation Creek bridge south of Stanthorpe, or much needed upgrades to the Gore Highway between Goondiwindi and Millmerran.

I listened keenly to the Treasurer's speech, waiting to hear that the people of Southern Downs would be rewarded for the huge contribution we make to this state. I thought there might be: meaningful reform of the electricity industry, like the LNP is proposing, to cut down on power bills; some restraint in the cost of vehicle registration, which has risen obscenely under Labor; that they would cancel their plans to abolish the irrigation electricity tariff which is depended upon by so many farmers who pump water for their irrigation; or better funding for the Child and Youth Mental Health Service in my electorate, which is so important to help kids in need by getting them the diagnosis they need so that the schools can be funded for the additional staff they are entitled to.

Alas, my hopes fell on stony ground—nothing, not a sausage, nothing real. I looked at the glossy Darling Downs budget bauble and I saw that the government are claiming they are going to spend about \$800,000 on the roof at Stanthorpe Hospital. That is not new money, that has been planned for ages and it is maintenance. Are they going to let the hospital fall down? What about the money they are planning to spend on Glen Niven Dam? The state government have an obligation to maintain that dam in a safe state. I hope the Treasurer does not expect us to thank her for those announcements.

What we do see, however, is gargantuan spending in Brisbane on projects of dubious importance, including billions all up on the pet project of the Treasurer, Cross River Rail. Perhaps this might help the Treasurer to stay on good terms with the dwindling number of Labor voters in her electorate, but for the good folk and true of my electorate of Southern Downs it offers nothing. We see millions and millions of dollars showered on inner-city Brisbane Labor seats for things like bike trails. In one case, there is \$17 million this year alone out of an eye-watering total spend of \$45 million.

This money could be much better spent on water infrastructure in my electorate which would expand agricultural production and provide jobs and prosperity in the bush. Just imagine how many isolated families, like those in the Traprock district in my electorate of Southern Downs, could have a proper school bus service for that kind of money. What about the dog fencing that is vital because it

keeps lambs and sheep safe? I can see that my honourable friend the member for Gregory agrees with me on that. How many kilometres of dog fencing could be built for over \$40 million? How many surgical procedures could be undertaken at Texas Hospital, keeping local patients close to their homes and families?

I have heard the government wax lyrical about how this is a true Labor budget. Obviously, I could not agree more with that assertion. I well recognise the re-announcements of old money and the pledges to spend money on infrastructure, which so frequently never actually gets finished. True to Labor's long established form for high-taxing, high-borrowing economic backwardness, we see before us yet another budget which mires us and future generations unborn in permanent debt. It extorts from the productive and hardworking people of Queensland new and increased taxes and charges, and it will result in reduced economic and employment growth.

We need to be really clear about this. Labor have given up on even the pretence that they will ever pay back the debt. We are talking about Labor's debt here. Remember that they have been in power for 23 of the past 28 years. They promised before the 2015 state election that they would repay the debt, but of course this has never happened and, according to this budget, it never will. Labor never learn—or maybe they just do not care—that you do not tax people into prosperity, nor do they appear to understand that you do not borrow into prosperity. We used to have a AAA credit rating in this state, but that is just a memory now thanks to Labor. Queenslanders are condemned to paying \$400,000 an hour on interest payments alone to sustain this enormous \$83 billion debt.

The LNP knows that a strong and growing economy is essential to sustainably fund the things that we need government to provide. The roads, the infrastructure and the health, education and law and order services that we need cannot be provided over the long term without a strong and growing economy. The flip side of this is that you cannot have a strong economy if your government is bloated, overtaxing and hopelessly ridden in debt.

Not only does such a government ultimately deprive the people of the state of the services that they need, but it also condemns the state to a perpetual downward spiral—where more and more tax needs to be extracted from an ailing economy to pay higher and higher interest bills, which in turn become even greater when the inevitable credit downgradings flow. We need only be reminded that the Leader of the Opposition said that the vulnerability of the state to economic shocks and natural disasters is increased by having high levels of debt.

Labor boast about putting their people first. Let us have a look at that and at this government's outrageous waste tax—one of the many new taxes and charges in this budget. It is an atrocious \$1.3 billion impost on Queenslanders, a tax which will drive up prices for goods and services and houses and which is yet another millstone around the neck of the families, regional councils and small businesses. We were told by the government that this giant tax was strictly essential to prevent interstate dumping, but this was only an issue for Ipswich thanks to its infamously odious council. That Labor council there gave the nod to the dumps where this interstate dumping occurred, yet now we have this huge statewide tax.

What on earth do the people of my electorate of Southern Downs get for this? Nothing but increased costs and the depressive effect they have on jobs and small businesses. It is iniquitous, but it gets worse. When the Labor city council in Ipswich suddenly announced that it was going to cease recycling, the Treasurer—ever keen to get her hands into the pockets of Queenslanders—gleefully used it as an excuse to bring forward the introduction of her huge waste tax. When the very next day the Labor council in Ipswich backflipped on its decision to end recycling, we would expect the Treasurer would cancel her early introduction of the tax but, no, the early introduction of this appalling tax stayed—such is the insatiable addiction that this government has to spending our money.

I am thinking about a few examples which are interesting for my own electorate. I have tried with very little success to get answers from the Minister for Transport and the CEO of QR over the depositing of railway sleepers along the sides of the Wallangarra line in my electorate. Thousands of railway sleepers were taken out on trains at great expense and dumped by the railway line and left there for six months. They were then picked back up again at great expense and taken away somewhere else and then a few months later they were redeposited by the line—that was about seven months ago—and they still sit there. The only work which has been done in that time, according to constituents around Ballandean, was that a load of railway navvies arrived—on Anzac Day, no less—to shuffle sleepers for a few hours, and that only occurred after I made complaints to the local media about the wastage and the profligacy in Queensland Rail.

In the city, we have examples where we cannot find drivers apparently. We are not allowed to look outside Queensland Rail, according to the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union, so we are now instead paying \$41 million in overtime for drivers. At the same time, we are getting 470 fewer services per week. If this is the way that Labor spend the money, I can understand why people are reluctant to give it to Labor because they do not spend it so well that they need extra. This government would prefer to take the easy option of slugging us more in taxes, rather than doing their job properly and working out ways to manage this state with the money they earn and spend our money better. Queensland families have to work under that rule. Families have to spend their money better. There is a limited amount a family has access to, and they have to prioritise and spend it well. We do not find that from this government.

What about employment in our state? The Queensland jobs market is beginning to reap the bitter fruit of years of Labor's economic mismanagement. Next year employment growth is forecast to fall by 1.25 per cent and with economic growth projected to decline, this number is in danger of worsening further. Labor needs to understand that putting on thousands of senior bureaucrats in Brisbane is not job creation. On the contrary, it burdens the economy and promotes the growth of red tape and regulation. Those jobs have to be paid for by the hardworking people who run and work in small businesses on our farms and in our shops: our butchers, pharmacy assistants, truckies, tradies, hairdressers and newsagents. We must remember that it is the initiative, investment, dedication and imagination of small businesses and their staff that is the powerhouse of jobs in our state, not a bloated government in Brisbane.

Of course, we do understand that public services need to increase in response to population growth. However, the ranks of senior executive public servants have grown by more than 30 per cent. That is a whopping 4,158 officers under this Labor government—if we can believe their statistics. They are not front-line staff nursing patients, taking classes and arresting criminals. I will wager a penny to a pound that not one of them is in my electorate of Southern Downs. I will bet that almost all of them are here in Brisbane.

The ballooning of the Brisbane bureaucracy is a real slap in the face for the people of Southern Downs, the people who live in and on the land around Warwick, Inglewood, Texas, Goondiwindi, Killarney, Stanthorpe, Millmerran, Allora—whatever it is that these bureaucrats do. Some of them have most probably worked on the development, marketing and implementation of this government's miserable attack on the property rights of farmers and on the economic and social interests of rural communities like mine.

I was proud to listen to the budget reply speech by the Leader of the Opposition, Deb Frecklington. She called out this budget for the failure that it is and outlined the LNP's alternative with the authentic voice and common sense of a person who really gets it. She talked about electricity reforms; breaking up the government generators from two into three to improve competition and drive down prices for consumers; a 30-year water security plan, recognising the vital importance of water for our industry and for our consumers in this state; our commitment to air-condition every classroom in this state so that teachers and students can be comfortable while they learn; and of course to bring in no new taxes. Deb Frecklington is comfortable in the real world of families, schools, pubs, country shows, city streets and small business. The Leader of the Opposition understands that governments exist to do the basics, and they must do them really well whilst always respecting the hard-earned money of Queenslanders.

I was pleased to see that this budget received from the press the criticism that it deserves. Overwhelmingly, media reports noted and criticised Labor's budget for broken promises, excessive and growing debt, ballooning bureaucracy and high taxes—and rightly so, too. I would like to refer to an article by Judith Sloan, which appeared in the *Australian* earlier this week. She stated, 'Queensland Treasurer and Deputy Premier Jackie Trad knows as much about economics as I know about astrophysics.' She went on to say—

She gets an A+ for her double standards: She is more than happy to spend the surging royalties from mining in her state (more than \$800 million in additional royalties over the forward estimates), while actively whiteanting the Adani coal project and bagging the resources industry more generally.

The article goes on to say—

Unable to escape its runaway spending on public servants, it is at least conceded in this year's budget papers that "the average growth in employee expenses over the five years to 2021-22 is 4.5 per cent per annum ...

That is about double the inflation rate. I am glad to see that the analysts in the media see this budget for what it is. I table that article for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Australian*, dated 13 June 2018, titled 'One thing is crystal clear, Jackie doesn't have a clue' [\[910\]](#).

This budget is one of taxes, debt and unemployment. It condemns generations yet unborn to the millstone of debt. This budget fails the people of my electorate of Southern Downs and all Queenslanders, unless of course they are high-ranking bureaucrats who ride bikes in Ashgrove.