




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2); AND APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (4.31 pm): I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the bills before us: the Appropriate Parliament Bill (No. 2), the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill and the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Whenever we talk about money bills, we should consider how the government is spending the money that we as the parliament gives it. I am not particularly impressed nor are the people in my electorate of Southern Downs. Queensland's fiscal and economic position has continued to weaken under the Palaszczuk government. This is yet another example of the Palaszczuk Labor government's complete failure to manage the state's finances and, having seen a shocking unforeseen expenditure amount of almost \$2.3 billion last financial year, we now see further over expenditures.

You just cannot trust Labor to manage a budget or to manage an economy. In her first budget, the Treasurer single-handedly set Queensland on a course for a record debt of \$83 billion, which is a colossal debt. It is a disgrace that will have to be dealt with by future generations. If we cannot live on the money that we have today, how will we live tomorrow and pay the interest on the debt and continue to invest? This government has embarked on a course of economic management that is utterly unsustainable.

The Treasurer and Labor's left have shamefully abandoned Labor's so-called debt action plan, meaning that even after raiding public servants' superannuation, Queensland is still heading towards record debt. The Treasurer's first budget broke her own government's fiscal principles. Public Service growth is more than double that of population growth. The Treasurer has increased Queensland's relative debt burden every year across the forward estimates, as mentioned by the general government debt-to-revenue ratio. Only Labor could be the beneficiary of a massive coal royalty windfall, still bring in five new taxes and increase borrowings to plug the budget black hole, while racking up more and more debt.

This Palaszczuk Labor government is a government of taxes, debt and unemployment. When you talk to the people of Southern Downs, they will tell you that they want to see a government that runs a tight ship. We are certainly not seeing that here. Labor has run the state for most of the past 30 years. In the years of former premiers Beattie and Bligh—and our own Premier sat at the cabinet tables of those governments—rivers of revenue poured into the state. They had more money than they knew what to do with, but they found ways to spend it.

Mr Costigan: Rivers of gold.

Mr LISTER: I take the interjection from my honourable friend the member for Whitsunday: there were rivers of gold. Where did all the money go? We know that it was just blown. It was wasted on thought bubbles and stupid programs because of an irresponsible misunderstanding of how we should be treating taxpayers' money, that is, the money of the people whom we represent here in this House.

We are talking about economic management, which is what that is really all about. I heard my honourable friend the member for Gladstone, our assistant Treasurer, make the astonishing statement that you have to put up taxes and you have to increase debt, because there is no other way to build infrastructure. That sums it up. It is a very revealing statement that betrays much about Labor's understanding of economics. I can tell members the answer: you spend the money better. You do what every person who pays our salaries—the people we represent in this place—have to do around the kitchen table. They have to divide up what they have, they have to make sure that payments due do not exceed accounts received. They cannot afford to squander money the way this government does, yet it is their money that this government is squandering.

Mr Costigan: They are butchering it.

Mr LISTER: That is a very pithy interjection that I accept and I thank my honourable friend the member for Whitsunday. We are always being told that Labor would not do such a thing as sell assets. I have been talking to a few constituents in Southern Downs who have come up with a common line, which is that Labor is not the party that it used to be. Look at all the assets that they said they would never sell, such as ports, forests, railways—

Mr Costigan: Airports.

Mr LISTER: That is right: and the Mackay airport in the neck of woods of my friend from Whitsunday. Those have all been sold. Every sacred cow has been sold off and butchered. They have sold themselves out on the question of public ownership and they should hang their heads in shame for coming into this place and speaking about asset sales. They are in no position to do that. They are not fit and proper people to lecture anyone about the sale of public assets. Labor managed to sell all of those assets and there is hardly anything left, but where is the money? It has been squandered, I suppose.

Let us look at their approach to addressing unemployment in this state. We have over 1,000 more senior and senior executive public servants in the state. That costs the budget \$1 billion every year, which is a lot of money.

Mr Costigan: A lot of fat cats.

Mr LISTER: It is a lot of fat cats. As I have said before, we are not talking about teachers taking classes. We are not talking about police who are arresting offenders or nurses attending patients. We are talking about bureaucrats who cost the state a fortune in terms of their conditions. In addition, they specialise in creating red and green tape that makes it harder for the private sector in this state, which is the true generator of jobs, to get done what it has to do. The biggest insult is that they are paying for it while they are having to deal with the red tape that is being created. That public sector growth is unsustainable.

I say again that if we cannot afford to live on what we earn now, how will we live in years to come and pay off the debt? How will we manage the debt? I suppose there is an institutionalised assumption that manna from heaven will rain down and somehow we will be able to meander on. However, there will be a day of reckoning and it is only people on this side of the House who recognise that.

We have seen an explosion in red and green tape. The small businesses and the farmers of the state are trying to make a living. They are trying to make their way in the private sector, creating jobs, wealth and taxes to pay for all of us here and for all the things that we are scrutinising. However, their job is being made harder and harder. As I said, families cannot manage their budgets in this way. They cannot hamstring themselves with all sorts of ridiculous imposts and rules. They cannot spend more than they earn, but that is what the government is doing.

What are the priorities that we see from the government? We do not see much in the way of economic sustainability, but we see a lot of political correctness. I think of the very hardworking farmers in the western part of my electorate of Southern Downs and in other electorates near me. I see my honourable friend the member for Scenic Rim, who knows as I do that there are farmers operating bores on behalf of their local communities as class 2 water authorities who have to annually elect their board members, but have had their elections thrown in their faces because there were not enough women on those boards. We are talking about unpaid positions where board members have to undertake physical tasks associated with the upkeep of their water authorities.

Mr Costigan: Morning, noon and night.

Mr LISTER: Morning, noon and night; that is correct. They have to go out there, roll up their trousers and clear ditches. They have to replace pipes and switch on valves. It is not the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority or the Cultural Centre Trust; these are unpaid positions. The government

has the audacity to throw back in their face their elections and say, 'This is not good enough. We don't like the way you have conducted these elections. We are going to impose puritanical political correctness on you.'

Excuse me, those guys are the ones who are paying the welfare bill in this country. Their work in growing things from nothing and creating taxes from nothing are paying for politicians, nurses, police and doctors in this state. It is time this government took a turn away from its puritanical political correctness crusade and started looking at our economy—the debt and how they spend their money. They need to spend it better. They need to take less of it off the people and they need to deliver better. We are seeing ramping reintroduced in hospitals and increased waiting lists. They are spending more and more than ever.

This government cannot be trusted to spend the public's money. They do it inefficiently. They do it without regard for how hard it is to make. Let me tell members that it is a lot harder to make the money than it is to spend it. That is something that the government should bear in mind. Having said all of that, we support the bills, but with the keenest of reservations as to how the Labor Party might spend the money that is appropriated.