Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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

Mr MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.20 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate on the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2018 and Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2018. I will start by discussing the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill was introduced in parliament on 22 August this year by the Treasurer and considered by the Economics and Governance Committee. As outlined in the explanatory notes, the Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 makes various amendments to a number of acts administered by the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

More specific objectives of the bill include supporting the expansion of electronic conveyancing; ensuring that charitable institution registration requirements in relation to the use of income and property operate as intended; and giving retrospective legislative effect to a number of administrative arrangements. These include extending the transfer duty concession for family businesses of primary production to all types of dutiable property used to conduct a primary production business; ensuring that certain deregistered managed investment schemes can be treated as exempt managed investment schemes in particular circumstances and subject to conditions; and updating the rate used to calculate the exempt component of a motor vehicle allowance, ensuring that payroll tax can be correctly calculated.

Further stated objectives of the bill include supporting the implementation of the new service delivery model for the State Penalties Enforcement Registry by making amendments to address technical issues within the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999; and capturing and prohibiting substances such as turbo yeast that can be used to make homemade alcohol in nine discrete Indigenous communities.

Other stated objectives of the bill include reinstating the 'last claim standing' provision as previously understood by decision-makers under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 prior to the Supreme Court handing down its ruling on Nuga Nuga Aboriginal Corporation v Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships 2017 QSC 321 and validating decisions made and actions taken and transition actions taken where processes had already commenced under these acts; and making minor administrative arrangements changes to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority Act 2016, including amendments to allow for the board to appoint an interim chief executive officer, and expressly confirming that compulsory land acquisition applications may be endorsed by the minister administering the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority Act 2016.

The Economics and Governance Committee was advised that government consultation had been undertaken for some of the amendments contained within these bills. This includes consultation on supporting the expansion of electronic conveyancing, consultation with the mayors of nine Indigenous communities that have alcohol management plans and consultation with three government departments on amendments impacting Cross River Rail. However, consultation was notably not undertaken when it came to other revenue amendments in the bill or when it came to amendments to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage acts.

I note that 14 stakeholder submissions were received. Of these, five spoke against the amendments to reinstate the 'last man standing' claim. I also note that concerns were raised about the additional regulatory burden being placed on charities and not-for-profits from amendments in this bill.

This bill, in attempting to amend no fewer than 11 acts at once, manages to inadvertently highlight the many failures of this government, and I am afraid they will not simply be amended away. We have Labor's and the Treasurer's pet infrastructure project, Cross River Rail, already over 18 months behind schedule according to the original business case. We have SPER debt continuing to climb under Labor instead of being paid off, which is an approach to debt that is entirely typical for this Labor government. On top of this, an ongoing SPER ICT project has run well over budget from $47.2 million to $62.2 million. Between this ICT project blow-out and the Health ICT blow-out, it is amazing that this government has any money left to spend. Clearly Labor's softly, softly approach is costing Queensland taxpayers more and more every day whether it comes to SPER debt or government debt.

I will now discuss the appropriation bills. The objective of these bills is to seek formal authorisation for the specified amounts in each bill that the Treasurer paid from the Consolidated Fund for unforeseen expenditure that occurred in the 2017-18 financial year. Unforeseen expenditure refers to expenditure from the Consolidated Fund in excess of the amount provided by the Appropriation (Parliament) Act 2017 and the Appropriation Act 2017, and authorised by the Governor in Council to be made in advance of appropriation.

Under these bills, the Treasurer is authorised to pay $494,915,000 from the Consolidated Fund for several departments as stated in schedule 1 for the financial year starting 1 July 2017. This includes $12,419,000 for Child Safety, Youth and Women; $187,947,000 for Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs; $16,652,000 for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy; $37,918,000 for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy; $231,252,000 for Transport and Main Roads; $13,000 for the Office of the Governor; $57,000 for the Queensland Audit Office; and $8,597,000 for the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

Under these bills the Treasurer is also authorised to pay $5,140,000 from the Consolidated Fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 2017. The unforeseen expenditure incurred by the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service was advised by the Queensland Treasurer to be primarily due to costs associated with the 2017 electoral boundary distribution and state election. Lower equity adjustments were also applied to offset the additional departmental services.

The total authorised expenditure for these two bills equals $500,055,000. That, of course, is over half a billion dollars. If we look at previous years, last year there was unforeseen expenditure of $2.272 billion. In 2015-16 it was $390,125,000. If we compare that to the previous three financial years when the LNP was in government, there was unforeseen expenditure of $12 million in 2014-15, $447 million in 2013-14 and around $63 million in 2012-13.

Queensland's fiscal and economic position has continued to weaken under the Palaszczuk government. These bills are yet another example of the Palaszczuk Labor government's complete failure to manage the state's finances, after having a shocking unforeseen expenditure amount of almost $2.3 billion last financial year. Including the unforeseen expenditure in these bills, this government has racked up over $3.16 billion in unforeseen expenditure from 2015-16 to 2017-18, displaying a complete inability to set limits on their use of taxpayers' money. If we include 2014-15 for the LNP, the Palaszczuk Labor government has spent $2.67 billion more in unforeseen expenditure than the previous LNP government in a comparative three-year period.

We cannot trust Labor to manage a budget and we cannot trust Labor with Queensland's economy. The Treasurer's first budget single-handedly set Queensland on a course for a record debt of $83 billion. The Treasurer and Labor successfully abandoned Labor's so-called debt action plan, meaning that, even after raiding public servants' superannuation, Queensland is still heading towards a record debt. The Treasurer's first budget broke her government's own fiscal principles: public servant growth more than double that of population growth, at 3.6 per cent last year, and increasing Queensland's relative debt burden every year across the forward estimates, as measured by the general government debt to revenue ratio. Only Labor could get a massive coal royalty windfall and bring in five new taxes and still have increased borrowings to plug the budget black hole, while racking up more and more debt. The Palaszczuk Labor government is a government of taxes, debt and unemployment for Queenslanders.

Queensland currently has the worst unemployment rate in the nation at 6.1 per cent trend. The national unemployment rate may have gone down, but this Labor government managed to buck that trend and get Queensland's unemployment to increase. Over 162,500 Queenslanders are looking for work and unable to get a job. There were 11,600 Queenslanders who lost their jobs in the last month, and over 23,000 who gave up looking for work in the last month alone. The June ABS national accounts revealed that Queensland had the worst economic growth of any state in the June quarter, at only 0.1 per cent growth. That came in the same quarter as the government's budget of taxes, debt and unemployment.

Business confidence has plummeted under Labor. The June Sensis Business Index put the Palaszczuk government as the least popular government among small and medium sized businesses. The June CCIQ Pulse Survey continued to show that business sentiment and profitability both remain negative and that the divide in business confidence between South-East Queensland and regional Queensland continues to grow.

The October CommSec State of the States report puts shame to the Premier's state of the state 'golden age' claim, putting Queensland in sixth place in the nation, solidly in the bottom half of the economic ladder behind South Australia. The economy has ground to a halt under Labor. The June ABS national accounts reveal this, with Queensland having the worst economic growth of any state in the June quarter. On Labor's preferred measure, which is seasonally adjusted, ABS Construction Work Done fell 3.9 per cent in the June quarter, which is the second largest drop in construction work in the nation. This translates to construction sector jobs going begging.

Queensland has suffered from the largest drop in investor confidence in the whole nation, according to the Infrastructure Investment Report for 2018. New South Wales and Victoria are now nearly three times more attractive for those wanting to invest in infrastructure than Queensland, and it is Queensland's jobs that suffer. Fewer than 10 per cent of investors recently surveyed thought that the Palaszczuk Labor government was easy to work with.

Queensland's fiscal position has continued to weaken under Labor. As mentioned earlier, we are heading towards a massive debt bomb of $83 billion. Only Labor can achieve this with new taxes and a royalty windfall. Fitch Ratings recently downgraded Queensland's credit outlook as a direct result of the Treasurer and the Premier breaking their own fiscal principles of lowering the general government debt to revenue ratio. The Treasurer has refused to put a time limit on restoring Queensland's AAA credit rating, which was lost under the Bligh government when the now Premier sat around the cabinet table.

In contrast, the LNP has a real economic plan to secure Queensland's future, while Labor only has a plan for taxes, debt and unemployment. The LNP government will lower electricity costs by introducing competition to the market—a reform that Labor's own Productivity Commission found would lower electricity prices by hundreds of dollars in regional Queensland. The LNP will restructure our government owned power generators from two to three entities—a measure recommended by the ACCC's retail electricity pricing inquiry and an approach that is said to reduce wholesale power prices by around eight per cent.

We will get to work on much needed road and water security infrastructure, instead of just talking about it. We will fix the M1, we will build the second M1, we will deliver the Sunshine Coast rail duplication and we will support the Brisbane Metro. We will immediately stump up our share of the $3.3 billion in Bruce Highway upgrades to get much needed work started immediately. We will cut red tape and ensure faster payments to Queensland businesses, once again giving businesses a reason to invest and employ in Queensland. We will guarantee no new taxes under an LNP government because only the LNP has a real plan to secure Queensland's future. We recognise and support the fact that more money is required. We recognise that there is unintended expenditure. Of course we will always guarantee supply so we will support this bill.