




Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (5.37 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to speak to Appropriation Bill (No. 2), because there was a time under Labor in Queensland when we would not be given this opportunity. Appropriation Bill (No. 2) was wiped from the legislative agenda in 2008. I remember, because there was an Ethics Committee report—report No. 102—that investigated the move of then treasurer Andrew Fraser to remove Appropriation Bill (No. 2) from the entire discussion of this parliament. Members who were not around at that time—there are plenty—might not be aware that Appropriation Bill (No. 2) dealing with unforeseen expenditure for 2007-08 would not have been debated until August 2009, some 14 months later.

One of the things the LNP government did to increase transparency and openness and to provide appropriate reporting was reintroduce Appropriation Bill (No. 2), the bill we are debating today, and to lodge that bill with the Consolidated Fund financial report so that people can have an accurate idea of how much is being spent—or how much is being overspent—each year in the year that that money is actually being spent. Most people would regard that as being a normal part of business, unless you are in the Labor Party.

Turning to the appropriations themselves and Appropriation Bill (No. 2), I do of course with some fondness recall the incoming government brief to the LNP government in 2012 and the opening words of the incoming government brief prepared by the independent officers of Treasury: the state of Queensland's finances is unsustainable and restoration must be an urgent priority for this term of government. That was the independent advice and that was when debt was heading to \$85 billion. The \$85 billion number of course, as we subsequently found out, was a hopelessly optimistic number because it was predicated on revenues coming in—for example, stamp duty revenue—at 14 per cent as an increase year on year on year. At the height of the global financial crisis, Labor was predicting 14 per cent revenue increases.

We also had to write off over \$5 billion of coal royalty because of the hopelessly optimistic forecasts of the Labor government at that time. Speaking of coal, today I was listening to the member for Stafford, the Minister for Natural Resources, talking about the government's powering energy plan and how it had a clean and green agenda. I heard the Premier talk about a need for everyone to declare whether they believe in climate change, but did we hear anything, colleagues, about the love that Labor has for that whose name it dares not speak—that is, its love for coal and its love for the coal royalty resources? Those opposite stand up there week in and week out saying, 'Look at all the income. Look at our trade exports. They're more than X times they were under the LNP government.' What they are not telling you is that there has been a 20 per cent devaluation in the Australian dollar that means that we can now sell our coal and what they are not telling you is that demand in the world has picked up and they are riding on the coalminer's back here in Queensland.

**Mrs Wilson:** Absolutely.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** They are absolutely doing it, but they will not mention that. Here is a challenge for the Premier: will the Premier stand up and say she remains committed to digging coal out of the ground in Queensland, supporting rural and regional communities and burning that coal to provide cheap, affordable, reliable power throughout this state and throughout the developing countries in our region?

Returning to the appropriation bills and what is occurring there, what else did we hear back in 2012 apart from the fact that Queensland's finances were unsustainable? What did we hear from the Queensland Treasury Corporation? What did it say? It said that with the level of debt on issue and likely to be required Queensland is heading into uncharted waters. What did the independent Commission of Audit say with respect to it all? It said that Queensland's level of debt is very high and will require a very substantial proportion of repayment if the state's economic strength is to be regained. More recently, what has Sir Leo Hielscher said? What did Sir Leo say only three months ago in relation to the debt here? He said that it is unsustainable and something needs to be done about it. Quite frankly, nothing is being done about it under this Labor government.

When we came to office debt was budgeted to hit \$85 billion but was actually found to be heading to \$100 billion, and when we left office debt was under control. I heard the member for Stretton in his disingenuous remarks comment in relation to that. When we left office where did debt end up? It ended up \$2 billion less than we projected in the midyear economic forecast in December 2014—\$2 billion less than we forecast and \$10 billion less than those opposite forecast a year after we came to government. That was the record of the LNP government in controlling debt, and we managed to control unforeseen expenditure as well. We kept a tight rein on expenses so that Queenslanders got the services they needed at a price they could pay. At the same time we reduced stamp duty on the family home that Labor had increased by up to \$7,500, we gave everyone a bulk water rebate of \$95, we froze car registration for three years, we froze electricity bills in the first year and we cut payroll tax for the first time for businesses. We reduced payroll tax for small businesses, and what happened? Business said, 'We'd like to invest in Queensland. This is a government that knows what it's doing.' What are they saying under this government? They are saying, 'This is a government that doesn't know what it's doing.'

This is a government that, despite receiving a windfall from coal royalties, despite receiving a windfall from the change in the Australian-US dollar relationship and despite budgeting and receiving billions of dollars more in taxes, continues to fail to deliver services, continues to fail to deliver the infrastructure that it needs and continues to trumpet raising taxes as a way of lifting Queensland out of the doldrums that Labor has created. This government is a government without a financial or economic plan. This government is a government that does not know, nor does it care, to pay down or address issues in relation to debt. This is a government that, despite employing 23,000 more public servants, still cannot deliver the services that Queenslanders need. Whether you want to go to the hospital, whether you want to get to work or whether you want a decent education for your kid, this government still fails to deliver in so many areas and still charges Queenslanders excessive amounts for the pleasure of doing so.

Some 40 per cent of the budget now goes on salaries and wages here in Queensland—40 per cent of some \$55-plus billion—and Queenslanders are not getting any better reward as a result of that expenditure. All we see is excuses, investigations, cover-ups and another inquiry into the Public Service headed by Peter Coaldrake after the KPMG report was sat on for a year. Things must be going terribly well if Peter Coaldrake is back again doing it all over again—terribly well! There is no delivery of services and a budget that is out of control, a budget that was doing so well that the former person in charge of it was given the sack from the job by his own side after only two weeks.

**Mr Pegg** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Do not worry, member for Stretton: you will never get the job! I observed the member for Stretton deliver his usual—I hesitate to say this, but anyway—contribution. As someone on the government side with all of the briefing notes, he spoke for a grand total of six minutes. There is a sign of someone—well, he is following in the tracks of the Treasurer! This is a failed government with a failed budget and no economic plan.