




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.04 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the appropriation bills and commend the Leader of the Opposition, Deb Frecklington, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tim Mander, for their budget reply speeches in this House. I welcome the LNP opposition leader's plan that will enable Queenslanders to breathe easy at budget time—a plan for no new taxes under the LNP. Let us contrast this with the Palaszczuk Labor government, which has brought in nine new taxes and tax hikes on Queenslanders.

The Treasurer said in her budget speech that this is a budget for regional Queensland. This is rhetoric and nothing like the reality. I do not welcome this budget. This budget has proven that the Palaszczuk Labor government is anti resources, anti regions and anti jobs. The 2019 budget delivers higher taxes, more debt, fewer jobs and less infrastructure. About the only tax that was not in this Labor budget was a death tax—

Mr Janetzki: That's coming.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Order!

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Cairns, return to your seat or you will be warned under the standing orders.

Ms LEAHY:—but Labor has gone after anything else it can tax. The LNP on the other hand has outlined a positive future plan for Queenslanders. The LNP plan is to introduce retail price competition across the whole state for electricity. Under the LNP's plan, regional Queenslanders, like everyone who lives in my electorate, will be able to enjoy the choice of electrical retailers, just like those who live in the south-east corner. Contrast this to the state Labor government which continually uses electricity as a secret tax at the expense of regional taxpayers. Labor refuses to introduce retail competition for regional Queensland which is costing households around \$300 a year in added electricity bills despite in 2016 the Queensland Productivity Commission recommending increased retail competition.

We in the LNP have a plan to back our farmers and get behind agriculture, a plan to build new dams because where there is water there is wealth and where there is wealth there are jobs. Contrast this to the comments about the Labor budget from one of Queensland's peak agripolitical groups, AgForce—

When the headline program in the agriculture portfolio is a shark netting program, that tells you everything you need to know about the government's attitude towards primary production.

They are the words of Mike Guerin, the CEO of AgForce, when describing this Labor budget.

The LNP plan is to deal with the scourge of ice in our communities and to build four new rehabilitation centres across the state, with more detox facilities to help people kick their addiction. I have no doubt that criminal bikie gangs bring illegal drugs into my electorate. Let us contrast this LNP plan to Labor's soft-on-crime approach where only two bikies have been convicted of habitually consorting since Labor introduced its new laws and not one has been sentenced to imprisonment. Labor is soft on crime.

The LNP plan is to give the resources sector the certainty it needs. The LNP will give the industry a 10-year royalty guarantee, ensuring that businesses can safely invest in Queensland such as those businesses that operate in my electorate. Royalties will be frozen for a decade. The LNP will not hold the mining industry to ransom like Labor or jack up the royalties on petroleum by 25 per cent out of the blue. The LNP will not squander this state's royalties like Labor has on its pet projects in the electorate of South Brisbane. Every cent from Galilee Basin royalties will go towards building a better Queensland into a new LNP Queensland infrastructure fund.

The fund will be used exclusively to pay for schools, hospitals, roads and bridges across Queensland and in my electorate. The LNP will ensure that the regions get their rightful share. I contrast that commitment to this budget's reduction in infrastructure spending by half a billion dollars in the Darling Downs region and the reduced infrastructure spend in the outback region.

A future LNP government will stand up for manufacturing. The LNP will create a \$20 million fund to back heavy engineering and manufacturing in this state. I contrast that commitment to what this Labor government is doing to the manufacturers in my electorate, who are worried about future increases in electricity prices. These manufacturers have contacted Ergon Energy and Energy Queensland. These businesses have said very clearly, 'The statement by the minister that our power bill would go down is not correct.'

I turn now to matters of the Local Government portfolio—an area that I am passionate about. There is no secret that the relationship between local governments and the state government in Queensland is at an all-time low. The people in local government—the mayors, the councillors and the staff who put in the blood, sweat and tears to achieve better outcomes for their councils and their communities—feel let down by this Labor state government. The so-called Partners in Government Agreement between the state and local government has been trashed by the Palaszczuk Labor government. The lack of genuine consultation, or more likely the imposition of requirements on local government in Queensland, has frustrated and incensed local government members. We also know—and this budget has confirmed—of the higher costs for the 2020 local government elections. Since 2016, the cost to run the local government election has more than doubled. Ratepayers will bear this cost. The indications are that the cost will increase from \$13 million to \$27 million in 2020.

Mr POWER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That is both untrue and anticipates debate. It is not part of the budget.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Member for Logan, I have been advised by the Clerk that your point of order is not a point of order because you cannot anticipate during a speech on the budget.

Ms LEAHY: The ECQ has already factored in the additional costs of the state government's proposed changes to the local government voting system. We can see that in the program statements. That is \$14 million of ratepayers' funds that will not be spent on Queensland parks, gardens, roads, water or sewerage because of the state Labor government's impost on ratepayers.

Previous Labor governments removed \$1 billion from the grants and subsidy programs for Queensland councils. That is now catching up with councils. We see the Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program is being heavily oversubscribed with applications. Much of the water and sewerage infrastructure across Queensland is starting to reach an age where it needs significant repair or refurbishment. The LGAQ warned the following in its media release in relation to this budget—

Regional communities also face a looming water infrastructure challenge, both in terms of supply and treatment.

This budget does not address the looming infrastructure challenge that is concerning many councils. Labor's fifth tax—the waste levy—is impacting ratepayers. We read in the *Courier-Mail*, 'Levy forces dump fee rise' and that businesses in Brisbane will be stung with a hefty increase in their dumping fees so that the Brisbane City Council can recover the cost of the Palaszczuk government's waste levy. Again, in the *Courier-Mail*, we read—

Logan businesses will be hit with steeper fees to dump their rubbish so the council can cover the cost of the Palaszczuk Government's waste levy.

I now wish to turn to the higher debt, taxes and fewer jobs in the budget, especially in the Warrego electorate, which I am privileged to serve as the local member. In the Warrego electorate, the Palaszczuk Labor government has betrayed the trust of families, local businesses and workers in the

resources sector across the Surat and Cooper basins. The petroleum royalty rate from the LNG and petroleum producers will raise \$467 million over four years. No business can afford to have an input cost increase by 25 per cent overnight without some consequences. If we couple the royalty increase with the increases in land tax rates for companies that have landholdings over the value of \$5 million, we find that the state government is doing a double tax dip on the LNG industry. From these tax hikes we can expect from the resource basins a reduction in local jobs; a reduction in investment in infrastructure, such as roads; a reduction in community sponsorship from the resources sector; and the contracts that benefit many local businesses to have even tighter margins. We can also expect to see a reduction in the compensation payments paid to landholders. For a government that does not like to talk about mining coal or gas, it has been willing to accept record royalties from the resources industry.

For five budgets I have looked for the words 'agricultural profitability' in the Treasurer's budget speech. In the first Palaszczuk budget, agriculture did not rate a mention in the Treasurer's speech. In the 2016 budget speech, there was an acknowledgement. In the 2017 budget speech, there was mention of agricultural assets. In the 2018 budget speech, agriculture was again punted. That shows how much this Labor government dislikes farmers.

In the 2019 budget speech, agriculture rated a mention. However, it is disappointing that this budget indicates that there will be 110 fewer full-time staff within the agriculture department. Regrettably, the budget allocates \$7 million over two years to support the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges to cease—yes, to cease—operations at the end of 2019. The people of my electorate are most disappointed with the closing of these agricultural colleges.

Labor's debt is on track to hit \$90 billion over the forward estimates. When Paul Keating left office, he left the nation with a \$96 billion debt. Queensland is fast approaching that massive level of debt, but we have neither the population nor the capacity of the nation to repay \$90 billion. A family of four's share of Labor's debt is a whopping \$67,000. To put this debt into perspective, the interest payments in one year would build a dual carriageway road from Brisbane to Perth. That is the length of road that cannot be built in Queensland every year because taxpayers' money has to be spent on interest payments to service the debt.

The Warrego Highway Upgrade Program is continuing, but I wish to make the point that this program was initiated by the former LNP state government and the former federal coalition government. There are numerous roads being neglected by the Palaszczuk Labor government in the Warrego electorate. Under this Labor government, every day single-lane bitumen roads are getting narrower and narrower. Many of these roads have school bus runs, such as the Meandarra-Talwood Road and the Jackson-Wandoan Road. Other roads, such as the Mitchell-St George Road, need widening to grow the tourism and agricultural industries.

While I am talking about roads, it would be remiss of me to not raise the rough surface of the St George-Bollon Road. I agree with my constituent Randel Newsham that this road must be one of the roughest roads in Queensland. Neither the budget nor QTRIP have road-widening allocations for these roads. I will continue to fight to have these roads upgraded at every opportunity. When it comes to regional roads, I will not rest like this lazy Labor government.

There are intersections such as on the Landsborough Highway at Augathella and the Jackson-Wandoan Road intersection with the Warrego Highway that need to have safety upgrades. I note that there is a planning project for the Jackson-Wandoan Road intersection with the Warrego Highway in QTRIP, but it is scheduled for 2021. I applaud the Augathella progress association for raising the safety of the Landsborough Highway intersection and its suggestions as to how to address these safety issues. Roads are the arteries and the veins for the Warrego electorate. I will continue to fight for better maintenance of my electorate's roads and widening and further safety upgrades at every opportunity. If you wanted to sum up this budget in a couple of lines, it would be this: when Labor runs out of money, it comes after yours. That is exactly what it has done in this budget.