




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2019

MOTION

Remote Area Tax Concessions and Payments

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (11.38 am): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Deputy Premier. Once again, regional Queensland is being disadvantaged by the recently released draft report from the Productivity Commission on remote area tax concessions and payments. Among the many other payments suggested for removal, the draft report recommends abolishing the zone tax offset.

The zone tax offset concession is offered by the Australian Taxation Office for people who live in remote and regional Queensland areas. The offset is to assist with what we all know are the high costs of living in remote areas, together with the high costs of amenities and many other factors that affect people living in remote and regional communities. As everyone is well aware, the people who work and live in the remote communities of Queensland are doing it extremely tough. These recommendations are another cruel blow to those hardworking people in remote and regional Queensland.

Removing the zone tax offset will affect up to 288,000 Queenslanders, with most of these people being represented by those opposite. It is time for those members to stand up for these people and demand their federal LNP colleagues to oppose these recommendations in draft form from the Productivity Commission and to support this motion. The Productivity Commission's report says, 'Remote living is largely a matter of choice.' In other words, if you do not like regional Queensland, you can get out.

If that sounds like talking points from the federal LNP, well they are. It is in their DNA to attack those people living in regional Queensland. But there is hope and that hope comes from the Queensland Palaszczuk government. We immediately opposed the Productivity Commission's proposals and we have made submissions to them. I acknowledge that we have just heard from the Deputy Premier that they actually have bothered to put in a submission—a one-page submission—which, as the Deputy Premier said, spends more time talking down the Queensland government, but they did not talk about how many job opportunities we have given remote and regional Queenslanders, particularly with our Works for Queensland packages. They all know how successful and well supported that program is by every mayor in regional Queensland who gets Works for Queensland funding.

I also call on federal Senator Matt Canavan instead of continuing to put down Queensland and remote Queensland every chance he gets in the media—at every opportunity he gets he talks down regional and Central Queensland—to stand up and tell the government not to support any of these recommendations. Minister Canavan was that passionate about this tax offset that he said he supported it going to the Productivity Commission to have a look at it. He said, 'It was no longer working as intended. It has barely increased now for 25 years.'

Not only did Matt Canavan want to send this off to the commission to get more money for regional and remote communities; now they have come back and said they want to scrap it. What was Matt Canavan's stance that he put to the commission now that they have come back and said they are going

to scrap it for every regional worker who is looking to get this offset bonus when they do their tax? It is up to Minister Canavan to stand up for regional and Central Queensland instead of downplaying and down talking workers in regional centres.

As we all know here in Queensland, the Palaszczuk government continues to back Queenslanders. We continue to back those who choose to live and work and raise families in remote and regional Queensland, just like where I am from in Central Queensland. The removal of the zone tax offset will cripple small, regional and remote communities who rely on attracting workers with this zone tax offset. Our government is working to create opportunities here in Queensland. We have created over 200,000 jobs, with more than half of those in regional Queensland. Our commitment to infrastructure in regional Queensland is \$29 billion. This is nearly 70 per cent of our infrastructure budget.

As I said earlier, this is a bad report. I implore the LNP to reject these recommendations and support those who are doing it tough, particularly those in central and regional Queensland. Instead, the Morrison government should adopt the Palaszczuk government's proposal to preserve the zone tax offset for Queenslanders who are living and working in regional Queensland. I ask all those opposite here today to stand with Labor and to stand with the Deputy Premier and support her motion and support regional Queensland.