



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, Report

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (3.36 pm): The estimates process this year highlighted the failure of the Workers Assistance Package and the Economic Transition Strategy on North Stradbroke Island, among other things. The Redland City Council recently put together a document called the 2019 North Stradbroke Island State and Federal Advocacy Document.

Tabled paper: Redland City Council report, undated, titled '2019 North Stradbroke Island State and Federal Advocacy Document' [1314](#).

Under the 'need for assistance' it states—

There is an urgent need—

and I emphasise 'urgent need'—

for a strong local economy on North Stradbroke Island to replace sandmining, which ends this year. The end of sandmining doesn't just mean a loss of jobs—

so not only the loss of jobs—

but contributes to the breakdown of the island's social fabric.

What we have seen over the last few years of Labor policy on North Stradbroke Island is that there has been a loss of hundreds of jobs, and this is having not only an impact on the workers and employment opportunities but it is impacting the very social fabric of the island. The document goes on to say—

The end of sandmining on NSI in 2019 will impact both the island and Redlands Coast's economy with the loss of 141 jobs—

and I emphasise that that is a further 141 jobs—

and a \$55 million contribution per year to Redlands Coast's Gross Regional Product. For Queensland, the economic loss extrapolates from \$5 million to \$86 million in GRP per year due to a loss in mining royalties.

In exchange, the State Government originally provided \$20 million over five years for the island's transition, with an additional \$3.87 million identified as in-kind funding from Queensland Government agencies.

This represents a mere 30 per cent of what Redland City Council mayor Karen Williams has estimated the real cost of the rushed ending of the resource sector on North Stradbroke Island is costing the community, which would need \$110 million to plug the gap that has been left by Labor's laws. It is obviously not working. The document goes on to say that there is 'a related \$5 million Workers Assistance Scheme administered as grants.'

In relation to the Workers Assistance Scheme—which began as the Workers Assistance Package—in estimates it was revealed that only 10 per cent of the Workers Assistance Package has actually been spent, so 90 per cent of the workers have been sacked without support.

When the program first started, there was nothing set up on the island. People had to duck into the Little Ship Club to try to get a bit of help. The department officials were thrown in the deep end, and I say well done to them for having to salvage a lack of planning by this government. This is not aimed at the workers on the ground who were trying to help. They had no office to start with and they occupied a bit of space at the Little Ship Club for many months.

The workers who had been sacked—and there were 30 in one tranche—came to my office and said, 'What do we do?' We went to the offices of three government ministers and asked them what the process was from there, and not one of the offices of the three ministers could answer the question. In the end, it was my office providing the information as best we could about this plan which was just a plan to try to have a plan and an afterthought. The workers were an afterthought. I note that the Deputy Premier was the mastermind of this failed plan. The odium of it will land on her legacy for the rest of her life. It has caused all sorts of harm and damage to our community and it will be on her head.

The government did not have a plan to start with. They could not help the first lot of people who went to them. The people said, 'We want to study,' but they were told, 'We can't help you study.' The people said, 'We want to start a small business,' but they were told, 'We can't help you.' They could not help anybody. It showed that the Palaszczuk Labor government did not care about the workers and they had no plan for them at all.

The document goes on to talk about not only the Workers Assistance Scheme but the engagement. It was selective engagement and it still is. There are protests on the island happening every few months with hundreds of people because the people do not believe they have been listened to. Many Indigenous groups are part of that as well. Indigenous people are coming by the dozens and dozens because they are upset. The latest is that the chamber of commerce has been kicked off the process. This is an economic transition without a chamber of commerce on the committee. What a shame.

(Time expired)