Speech By

Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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

Mr MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.23 pm): I rise to address the 2019-20 budget and support the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition in her reply. The member for Woodridge might talk about 'Deb-onomics', but thankfully the would-be Treasurer will never get that job and Queensland will be saved from 'Dick-onomics', that is for sure. Could honourable members imagine it—somebody who dreams of being the Treasurer and had the unsuccessful plot to bring her down. Thankfully for the people of Queensland that will never happen. Contrary to what the Deputy Premier would have us believe, the Palaszczuk Labor government has proven once again that it is anti resources, anti regions and anti jobs. No matter how the Deputy Premier would like to spin it, this is a budget about higher taxes, more debt, fewer jobs and less infrastructure.

The Queensland economy has stalled. Economic growth is flat at less than three per cent, substantially less than the long-term average of four per cent. Because of Labor's poor economic management, employment growth forecasts have dropped off from last year's optimistic budget. This means that there are now 26,000 fewer jobs expected by 2021-22 compared to last year's budget outlook. So much for a so-called jobs budget! This budget has now pencilled in a perpetually high predicted unemployment rate, which has led wages growth to stagnate and be revised down every year across the forwards. This is fewer jobs and less money in the pockets of hardworking Queenslanders.

The inconvenient truth for the member for South Brisbane is that on average the unemployment rate has been higher under Labor than the LNP. While the national unemployment rate remains low, the Palaszczuk Labor government has managed to buck this trend and keep Queensland's unemployment rate unacceptably high. I can report that the latest unemployment figures have been delivered this morning and Queensland's unemployment rate is 6.2 per cent, a full one per cent higher than the national figure and, of course, still lingering around the bottom of the table with regard to the other states. New South Wales and Victoria have left us for dead.

The March Sensis Business Index rates this Palaszczuk government as the least popular government amongst small and medium sized businesses for the fourth consecutive quarter. The March CCIQ Pulse Survey continues to show that not only has Queensland's economic outlook taken a dive but business conditions and profitability continue to rapidly weaken, which costs jobs. The April CommSec State of the States puts shame to the Premier's State of the States 'golden age' claim putting Queensland into sixth place in the nation, solidly in the bottom half of the economic ladder. With nine new and increased taxes, Queensland has well and truly lost its status as the low-taxing state. It is no wonder that businesses will not invest and employ in Queensland under Labor.

That is not the end of the bad economic news under Labor. ABS trend building approvals in Queensland have fallen every single month since January 2018. The value of building jobs has fallen by $364 million since January 2018. Queensland continues to be the strike capital of Australia, with the most working days lost of any state during the Palaszczuk government's time. Queenslanders have lost 156,200 working days to strikes since this government has been in power, equal to almost 33 per cent of the nation for that time period. ABS construction work done in the March 2019 quarter fell to the lowest level since December 2006. This translates to fewer construction jobs, which of course is fewer jobs for Queenslanders.

Queensland has suffered from the largest drop in investor confidence in the whole nation, according to the Infrastructure Investment Report for 2019. Money for Queensland's desperately needed infrastructure has been going to the southern states because of the Palaszczuk Labor government. New South Wales and Victoria are now clearly three times more attractive to those wanting to invest in infrastructure than Queensland, and it is Queensland's jobs that suffer. As if this flight of private investment in construction and infrastructure is not enough, this Labor government itself has failed to deliver. Labor always talks big about infrastructure, but it never delivers.

The truth about this budget is that Labor is borrowing more and building less. Infrastructure spending across the forward estimates has actually decreased by $23 million compared with last year's forecast. The Premier has invested less in infrastructure than any premier in living memory. Queenslanders are sick and tired of lucrative royalties delivered to this state from resources dug up in their towns going to the member for South Brisbane's pet project, Cross River Rail.

Not only is government infrastructure investment down; Labor has also killed off job-creating private sector projects worth billions. That is why Queensland roads are congested and getting worse. That is why Queensland schools are overcrowded and student results are in decline. That is why Queensland's public hospital waiting times are blowing out and ambulance ramping is increasing.

This budget also revealed that not only are Queenslanders being conned out of services; they are also being conned by Labor's broken promises. You cannot trust Labor. Revenue from vehicle registration will rise $1.85 billion in 2018-19 to $2.12 billion across the forward estimates on the back of above-CPI rego hikes, another broken promise of the Palaszczuk government and another example of Labor treating Queensland motorists as cash cows. Labor has broken its promise and now delayed its one and only additional ice rehab facility in Rockhampton. When Labor was elected in 2017, Annastacia Palaszczuk said that the facility would be delivered by June 2020. Now it is 'to be determined'.

The Queensland Resources Council said the new royalty hike on gas and petroleum is a broken promise by the Premier and a betrayal of trust for the 315,000 Queenslanders who work in the resources industry, including in regional Queensland. You cannot trust Labor. When Labor runs out of money, they come after yours. Queensland's fiscal position has continued to weaken under Labor. Queensland is heading forwards a massive debt bomb of $90 billion. Only Labor has a massive coal royalty windfall bringing in nine new and increased taxes but still has to increase borrowings to plug the budget black hole.

A higher payroll tax rate of 4.95 per cent will be introduced for businesses with taxable wages of more than $6.5 million a year, raising about $544 million over four years. An extra $778 million will also be raised by increasing land tax for companies and trustees with aggregate land holdings of more than $5 million by 0.25 per cent and by increasing the absentee land tax surcharge to two per cent. That surcharge will also be extended to foreign companies and trustees of foreign trusts.

This Labor government is working to ensure that Queensland is no longer the low-tax state, driving away business investment that costs jobs. As Property Council Queensland Executive Director Chris Mountford said—

> It is simply not accurate to suggest these taxes won't be paid by Queenslanders, or won't affect job creating investment in this state.

These new taxes and increased taxes amount to $1.25 billion over four years that were not promised in the last state election. That is on top of the $2.2 billion from the last budget. That means there were $3.4 billion in more taxes since the last state election. Despite these nine new taxes, over the forward estimates debt is now on track to hit over $90 billion. Labor's debt burden on Queensland is increasing, with a family of four's share of Labor's $90 billion debt bomb being a whopping $67,000. The same family is now set to pay $11,808 in tax in 2019-20, $1,256 a year more than under the LNP. Labor is failing to meet its own fiscal principle on debt, with the relative debt burden set to increase rather than decrease over the forwards even on its purposefully limited general government terms. Labor's 'borrow to build' mantra is a complete fabrication. Even the government's fiscal principle on general government capital expenditure shows cuts in 2019-20 and 2020-21 compared to MYFER in 2018-19.

Although the member for South Brisbane insists the government still has a debt reduction strategy, it is clear that this Labor government has entirely given up on paying off its ever increasing debt. Public service employee expenses are now expected to be $7.8 billion higher for 2019-20 than the LNP's last budget. A 3.3 per cent increase to Treasury's own staff compared to last year's budget shows how inept this Labor government is at reining in public service blow-outs. Once again, Labor failed to keep public service growth below or equal to population growth despite this being one of its fiscal principles. This is just one way in which Labor is bad with money and Labor waste is hurting taxpayers. The LNP has identified $1 billion of Labor's waste since the last election, and that is only from the information publicly available that the opposition leader referred to earlier.

The LNP will stabilise Labor's debt and then start repaying it with a target of regaining the state's AAA credit rating. We will do this without asset sales and without forced redundancies in the public service. The LNP will have a fiscal principle that over the economic cycle we will have a fiscal balance, that is, that we are not spending more than we earn. We will report against this fiscal principle every budget and map out a course for every dollar to stabilise and repay Labor's debt. That is the only way to stabilise and start repaying Labor's debt. We already see Labor write down $1.3 billion in revenue due to a forecasting area, a billion dollar blunder. Labor has failed to meet its fiscal principles every year, meaning every year more and more debt is added to the taxpayers' credit card.

I turn to my electorate. I was very happy to hear about extra money being spent at Everton Park State High School. Thankfully, I saved the school from being closed, something they thank me for every day. I am also happy to see money for the stage 1 upgrade of Stafford and South Pine roads. We expect to see that start at the end of this year. There are two issues in my area which have not been committed to but which need funding; namely, the accidents that continue to happen outside 667 and 669 South Pine Road. The moment it gets wet, cars career into fences and brick walls, putting pedestrians at risk. I have constantly asked the main roads minister to respond to this, but it is all talk and no action. I am very concerned that somebody will lose their life.

Another false announcement of the members for Aspley and Sandgate concerned $25 million being committed to the Linkfield Road overpass. A commitment of $100 million was given to this overpass by the federal government. This government claims it is filling in 20 per cent of the $25 million, but guess what? It is not in the budget papers; it is in QTRIP. Most of that money is beyond the estimates. There is no funding for it. Even if there were funding for it, it would not start until after the 2024 election. It is another con job. We will remind the electors of Sandgate and particularly Aspley, a seat that we will win at the next election, of this con job.