




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 10 September 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.10 pm): I, too, rise to speak in this cognate debate on the appropriation bills 2020, one being for the general budget and one being for the parliament. It is important that we explain to Queenslanders what the Palaszczuk Labor government is actually trying to do under the guise of COVID and our concerns around the health pandemic.

Governments are not dissimilar to households or small businesses in the sense that they must set a budget each year. They have to look at revenues and expenditures, what they will spend on. Sure, the government has a slightly larger budget—we are talking tens of billions of dollars as opposed to a household or a small to medium business—but the government also has an extraordinary number of public servants to assist it to prepare that budget. In a subsequent budget you look at how you tracked in the previous year, like we all do. You might have adjustments: sometimes you hit it, sometimes you go slightly under and sometimes you go slightly over.

In the case of governments, they need to bring forward appropriation bills to address unforeseen circumstances or unforeseen expenditure over the previous year. Good governments, like good households and good businesses, go pretty close. When in government the LNP had a pretty good track record when it came to unforeseen expenditure. In 2012-13, there was \$63½ million out of a \$60 billion budget at the time. To be \$60 million out is pretty good. In 2013-14, it was \$447 million. That was a little bit more, but I point out that \$265 million of that was for increases to superannuation benefit payments and long service leave. No-one would challenge the need to do that when we have a considerable Public Service budget. Then 2014-15 came within \$12 million of being on the money. That is a pretty good track record. Then we look at what bad governments do. They get shown up.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Order! Let us hear the member on their feet, please. No cross-chamber quarrelling.

Mr POWELL: They do not like to hear it. Their record speaks for itself: in 2015-16, \$390 million; in 2016-17, \$2.273 billion; in 2017-18 they did a little bit better, at \$500 million, and then in 2018-19 it was back over a billion dollars, at \$1.397 billion. This year we are getting an extra \$1.114 billion, but that was on the back of the former treasurer and member for South Brisbane, Jackie Trad, in April this year asking for an additional \$3.18 billion for this year. When we put that together, that is \$4 billion. I am sure that COVID has thrown curve balls to governments around the world, but we have to remember that we already had the highest unemployment rate, the lowest business confidence and the highest bankruptcy rate of any jurisdiction in Australia. To come in \$4 billion off the mark is a pretty lousy effort. How many treasurers have we had? Two. Can they name the debt? No. Can the Premier name the GST rate? No. We really are dealing with economic incompetence.

Mr Saunders: Who is the Coordinator-General?

Mr POWELL: That would be Toni Power, thank you. We do not want the government to think that it will be able to get away with this under the guise of COVID. Queenslanders need to understand that in Labor governments we have incredibly poor economic managers. It is just the Labor way. Normally with a government budget there is an estimates process. Given the nature of budgets, there is an opportunity for opposition members, government members and crossbench members alike to drill down into what is being spent, what was spent, why it was spent that way and whether it could have been spent better. Sadly this year, there is no budget. Again, I remind Queenslanders that it is not because we needed a federal budget first. Originally the then treasurer, Jackie Trad, the member for South Brisbane, was quite happy to hand down a budget in April before the federal government would have handed its down in May, so that excuse does not wash. We are not getting a budget. We have 41 pages of a glossy brochure and, apparently, that is supposed to cut it at this time.

Normally in an estimates process we would drill down into what is going on. As the shadow minister for state development, manufacturing, infrastructure and planning, I would like to ask a lot of questions around why we are suddenly approving an additional \$220 million for the Department of Regional Development and Manufacturing. Where is that money being spent? What is it being spent on? Why was it necessary in the year 2019-20? What did it go on? Was it another lot of failed IT projects? Was it pork-barrelling in Labor seats? We are not getting that opportunity because there is no estimates process this year because there is no budget. Again, it is indicative of what we get with a Labor government.

Sadly, we are already seeing the same mistakes being made around the 2020-21 interim supply. When Labor runs out of its own money, it comes for yours. Last year there was \$1.2 billion of taxes. Again this year the Treasurer has said that if Labor is re-elected on 31 October he cannot guarantee that there will not be new taxes. That means that every mum and dad, as they sit around the table trying to work out how they pay their bills, has that spectre hanging over them of another Labor tax, possibly a COVID tax.

Mr Krause: Ten new taxes?

Mr POWELL: It would not surprise us. We have a government that has no plan as to how it will spend the money allocated. Last year we saw that, despite all the promises of building infrastructure, it actually ripped \$1.3 billion out of the capital spend. Why would you reduce infrastructure spending during COVID, at a time when we desperately need infrastructure spending? That is jobs going begging. Again, that is mums and dads looking at their own budgets—incomes and outgoings—and saying, 'Hang on, there is job uncertainty here. How will I feed my kids and put them through school? How will I pay for the water and the electricity?' It is not acceptable.

Then we have the government's so-called recovery plan. This week, every member of the LNP has pointed out the failings of that recovery plan. In fact, many of the journalists have also. Many industry bodies have pointed out how it is a rehash and business as usual. In some cases, it is less than business as usual. There is nothing exciting the people of Queensland nor the industries in terms of how the Labor government will drag us out of the economic recession it has created. There is every chance that, had we had better economic managers in power at present, we would not be in an economic recession, but because of their track record that is where we are.

In contrast, the LNP offers a plan. We have a plan to stimulate the economy, to grow a decade of secure jobs. We will unleash Queensland industry and secure our children's future in doing all of that. We will do that by setting up an economic recovery agency that will be solely focused on ensuring we build infrastructure across the state. We will build the New Bradfield Scheme. Then we will set up the Queensland Dam Company and look at Nullinga and Urannah, at raising Burdekin Falls Dam, at Rookwood Weir and Emu Swamp and at fixing up Paradise Dam.

We will build a billion dollars worth of congestion-busting and safety improvements on our roads in South-East Queensland. We have heard from other members this afternoon about putting another bridge at the Centenary Motorway at Jindalee, duplicating Cleveland-Redland Bay Road and fixing up Gympie Road, both at Beams Road and as it heads past Chermside. There will be plenty more of those announcements to come.

That is all about getting people to and from work quicker and safer. That is about stimulating the economy and making sure that businesses can move product and people around as they need. There will be investment in public transport. There is the investment in the second M1 on the Gold Coast. We will air-condition every state school classroom. We will deliver all of this because we know that that is the kind of bold vision that is required to drag Queensland out of the economic recession that Labor has created. As we come to the 2020 election it really does concern me that people need to understand that we are in a pandemic, yes, and that that pandemic will be over in 12 months but the economic hurt of that pandemic will go on for years and years and years and we will need a government that has a plan to stimulate the economy and grow those jobs, and it is only the LNP that has that plan.