




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

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APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (5.18 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020. The bill authorises the Treasurer to pay amounts from the Consolidated Fund for departments for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years. In addition to the \$54.698 billion appropriated in the 2019 budget for this financial year, the bill is seeking a further \$3.181 billion to fund the government's coronavirus response.

In addition to the \$27.349 billion appropriated in the 2019 budget for the 2020-21 financial year to cover 1.4 years of government operations, the bill is seeking a further \$1.615 billion to fund the government's coronavirus response for the next financial year, starting 1 July 2020. The total amount of new appropriation from the Consolidated Fund for coronavirus measures of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years is \$4.796 billion.

Before we were hit by the coronavirus pandemic, Queenslanders were already facing a tidal wave of debt—all \$91 billion of it. Unfortunately, when we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that debt will have become a tsunami. Even before the first case of the coronavirus was detected in Australia, Queensland was at the bottom of the country's economic leaderboard, with record debt and unemployment. Hospital waiting times had blown out, our children's education standards had fallen, our police were overstretched and under-resourced, youth crime was out of control and we had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. After five years of a Labor government, Queensland also had the most bankruptcies in the country and business confidence was at rock bottom. At the same time, the Treasurer also introduced nine new taxes or increased taxes, ripping a further \$3.5 billion out of the state's failing economy.

No-one could have predicted the economic, social and health crisis that we have been dealt in the form of the coronavirus pandemic. Despite these unprecedented times, Queenslanders have proudly responded to the challenges and proven yet again just how deep the Queensland fighting spirit runs. However, Queenslanders deserve and expect far better leadership and economic management during these times. They do not deserve decades of ongoing economic pain and hardship brought on by a Labor government that has shown time and time again an abject failure to manage the state's economy.

Last week media reports confirmed what most Queenslanders already knew: according to a poll, only 20 per cent of Queenslanders were satisfied with the Palaszczuk Labor government's response to the coronavirus. This result, published in major papers, was the lowest result of any government and well below the 38 per cent of Queenslanders who were very satisfied with the performance of the Morrison government. More than two-thirds of the Queenslanders surveyed were gravely concerned about the state of the Queensland economy over the next 12 months and they are not alone. Earlier this month, CCIQ chief economist Dr Marcus Smith said that his biggest concern was that the economic crisis facing the state could become a financial crisis with a bigger impact than the GFC.

It was the architect of the once-strong Queensland economy, former Treasury and investment boss Sir Leo Hielscher, who first rang the alarm bells when he said that the Palaszczuk Labor government had no strategy, no plan and no program to pay down their debt, which at that time was

forecast to hit \$83 billion. Fast-forward to today and that \$83 billion is forecast to reach \$91 billion and counting. Sir Leo lamented the loss of the AAA credit rating at the hands of our current Treasurer's mentor, Anna Bligh. Cash resources and superannuation surpluses had been raided and debt was still rising. He said that our recent budgets had been balanced by the reallocation of our cash reserves. The most respected Treasury boss of our time was saying that this government was robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Now we learn that this year the Palaszczuk Labor government will not even be able to deliver a proper budget process for the people of Queensland. Come October this government will ask every Queenslanders to put their faith in them, despite desperately trying to avoid scrutiny of their economic performance and accountability. Given this government's track record of integrity scandals and economic mismanagement, it is no wonder that they are now using the cover of a health crisis to avoid scrutiny of the state's finances. Let us remember that this is the same government that spent \$10 million on consultants to work out how to reduce the number of consultants hired by the government and raided \$5 billion from the superannuation of thousands of Queensland government employees.

While other states and territories have announced comprehensive support packages for businesses, Queensland businesses have been left languishing. The Palaszczuk Labor government was the last state government to announce a major stimulus package. The federal government had announced two rounds of stimulus before Labor had even delivered one. When the businesses in my electorate of Ninderry and around the state looked for confidence and support from the Palaszczuk government, their silence was deafening. When they did respond, Labor's assistance package fell desperately short of what is needed to save jobs and support families. The sad reality is that over 120,000 Queenslanders have lost their job to the coronavirus and thousands of businesses, including many on the Sunshine Coast, are facing the very real prospect of never reopening their doors. We have been encouraged by the response of the federal government. It would be fair to say that while the Prime Minister has been doing the heavy lifting, announcing around \$320 billion of economic support, Queensland businesses have been left to languish thanks to the failure of this Labor government. Every day I receive dozens of calls from small business owners who are desperate for a lifeline from a government willing to invest \$200 million in a foreign owned airline. The Palaszczuk Labor government has failed Queenslanders at their time of most need.

The LNP have outlined a range of sensible support measures, but those too have been overlooked by the government. Those measures include introducing an electricity price ceiling so that households and businesses do not have to pay any increases in power bills during the declared public health emergency and for a period after as determined by the government; lifting the payroll tax threshold from \$1.3 million to \$6.5 million from 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 to provide instant relief for around 15,000 Queensland businesses—that is nine months compared to five months of relief announced by this government; freezing current registration of motor vehicle fees for the financial year starting 1 July 2020; introducing a bulk water price ceiling so that households and businesses do not have to pay any increases in bulk water bills during the declared public health emergency; providing payments to households in medically enforced isolation; fast-tracking \$500 million worth of road projects to create new jobs in regional Queensland; delivering fast state government payments to small business suppliers to improve cash flow and prevent job cuts; and providing small businesses with emergency grants of up to \$10,000 to match similar grants that every other state has.

Queenslanders lament for the days when Queensland was an economic powerhouse. Today, even though we are seeing positive signs that we are winning the battle against coronavirus, the economic prognosis is dire thanks to a Labor government that has no plan for the future. Only the LNP can provide Queenslanders with a long-term economic plan and a road to economic recovery.