




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (7.42 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Gerber, firstly, I would like to acknowledge your promotion to the role of Deputy Speaker. This budget, this moment, makes me think of my two young girls. It makes me think of 2040 when they will be in their 20s, starting their careers, starting their independent lives, maybe starting families and their contribution to their community. The 2020 recession will roll off the tongue as an historical reference. My girls will remember how they were schooled from home and may or may not remember a time when hand sanitiser and social distancing were not part of everyday life. The economy will have rebounded, we may have even had another downturn and the actions of governments at this moment will be largely forgotten.

I am under no illusion that there will be few people who will read my 2020 budget reply speech in 20 years time, but today I put this on the record just in case they do. I want them to know that debt and deficit was in the Palaszczuk government's DNA before the virus. Now they are opportunistically unashamed about racking up record debt and deficit. I want them to know that there was no plan for surpluses and debt reduction before the virus. Now they do not think they have to worry about it. I want them to know that there was not a government in Australia before the virus more eager to rack up debt and fund their frivolous initiatives than the Palaszczuk Labor government.

The Palaszczuk government spend like there are no consequences. If we all lived like that, we would be bankrupt. The sad thing is that in the world they live in, there are no consequences for their spending. Selfishly, they only think of themselves, about their own jobs. Politically, they can get away with spending like a drunken sailor because the consequences of those actions will not be on their careers. The consequences will be on the economy my daughters will be entering in 20 years. The consequences will be the fact that we could have had better roads, better schools and better hospitals if this government had not wasted money in 2020. The consequences will be that my girls will probably move from Queensland to find the opportunities that this state could have provided if this government looked further forward than the next opinion polls.

This budget was a unique opportunity to lead our state out of a COVID-inspired recession. Instead, and yet again, what we have is a budget from a government that shirks the hard work, a budget that avoids tough decisions, a budget that is an emblem of this government: content with standing still and avoiding trouble rather than building Queensland's ambition. It is a budget and a government that lacks leadership, lacks vision and fails to foster the economic conditions in which Queenslanders can thrive.

Queensland is the last state in the nation to release a budget this year and now we know why. The hypocrisy of this government is unmatched. To ask Queenslanders to trust them and then blatantly abuse that trust by hiding the dire state of our economy and their lack of vision until after the election is the ultimate betrayal. What we have seen in this budget is the extent of Labor's disdain for the truth and the lengths they will go to in order to hoodwink Queenslanders and abuse their misplaced trust. This

budget undermines the extraordinary effort that Queenslanders went to this year as we collectively battled an insidious threat. As we emerge from the COVID recession, Queenslanders deserve a budget that is built on ambition, is inspired by confidence and delivers a vision for the future. Instead, Labor have served up more of the same stale and recycled excuses for their failure to lead Queensland out of the economic wilderness.

The Labor Party has zero credibility when it comes to economic management. Assertions from the other side that Queenslanders gave the Palaszczuk Labor government a mandate at the election could not be further from the truth. Queenslanders were unfortunate victims of an orchestrated scare campaign. To blame COVID for the state's economic performance is a cheap shot given the Labor government's abysmal track record before the pandemic hit.

Before coronavirus Queensland had the highest unemployment rate, largest government debt, lowest business confidence and highest bankruptcies in the nation because Labor had no economic plan. Hospital waiting times had blown out, our children's education standards had fallen, our police were overstretched and underresourced, 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 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 challenge and proven yet again just how deep the Queensland fighting spirit runs. They deserve far better leadership and economic management as we emerge from the health crisis. They do not deserve decades of ongoing economic pain and hardship brought on by a Labor government that has been shown time and time again to be an abject failure at managing the state's economy. Today, as we move into COVID recovery mode, the economic forecast is just as dire, with debt now projected to blow out to \$130 billion and one of the worst unemployment rates in the country at 7.5 per cent. In four years time when our New South Wales cousins revel in the fruits of their government's tough decisions, Queenslanders will yet again bear the brunt of Labor's inability to invest for growth.

As we heard earlier from the Leader of the Opposition, despite the mammoth debt bill of \$130 billion, our state's net worth will have increased by a mere 0.8 per cent. It was the architect of the once strong Queensland economy, former Treasury and investment boss Sir Leo Hielscher, who first raised the alarm bells when he said that the Palaszczuk 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 \$130 billion. Sir Leo also lamented the loss of our AAA credit rating at the hands of the Labor Party more than a decade ago. Cash reserves 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. What the most respected Treasury boss of our time was saying was that this government was robbing Peter to pay Paul. History is repeating itself.

As we head into Christmas, there are almost 214,000 Queenslanders looking for work. During the last term of this Labor Party, from November 2017 to January 2020, this once proud state had, on average, the worst unemployment rate in the nation. Based on Labor's own forecasts and despite the massive debt burden, after another term of this Palaszczuk government our unemployment rate will still be the worst in the country.

I would like to reflect on what this budget has delivered for constituents in my electorate of Ninderry. It will not take long. Since I was first elected, I have been lobbying the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for funding for critical road infrastructure upgrades. This included, among other important traffic and safety improvements, upgrading the roundabout at the intersection of Yandina-Coolum Road and School Road. This is a failing intersection that can no longer accommodate the 8,000-plus residents of Coolum and the thousands more tourists who visit. Each day, parents and children from the Coolum State School need to negotiate this intersection as they travel to and from school. It is not just a bottleneck but also a serious safety concern as the backlog of vehicles tails back onto the Sunshine Motorway, causing the motorway to fail. This has caused many accidents over the years, some of them fatal. Members of the local Labor Party even staged a demonstration during the election campaign, waving placards at this very roundabout in Coolum where I met the minister last year, demanding their own Labor minister take action to bust congestion at Coolum.

My community and I were delighted in the lead-up to the election when the Labor Party finally committed to fund this important upgrade and also committed to duplicating the Sunshine Motorway. I can assure members that the thousands of motorists who get stuck in the congestion every single day were ecstatic at this announcement. Fast-forward to this week, though, a mere month after the election,

and now we find out these commitments were just another broken Labor promise, with not a single cent allocated in this year's budget to these important infrastructure upgrades. Residents of the Sunshine Coast have been short-changed yet again and rightly deserve better.

Down the road in Caloundra South, where police numbers have failed to keep up with the rapid population growth, crime is subsequently spiralling out of control and calls for service are at record highs, Labor promised a new police station—a carrot for the thousands of young families who now call that area home. With law and order being such an important issue right across the state, those voters put their faith in a Labor government that said it would listen and was willing to invest in the safety of the community. Where is the funding? Was it just another broken promise? These are just a few of the broken promises we have heard about this week. No doubt we will hear about many more by the time all my colleagues reflect on how the budget has failed to deliver for their communities right across the state.

Unfortunately, we have heard of yet another betrayal of Queenslanders' trust. During the election, the Treasurer assured Queenslanders that borrowings would be limited to \$4 billion to cover the costs of the Labor Party's election commitments. Was the Treasurer lying, or are his accounting skills so poor that he forgot to allow for the cost of running the state? When the Treasurer handed down his budget on Tuesday, we learned that borrowings will actually be in the vicinity—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Pause the clock. Member for Ninderry, I ask that you withdraw the unparliamentary language: 'lying'.

Mr PURDIE: I withdraw. Are his accounting skills so poor that he forgot to allow for the cost of running the state? When the Treasurer handed down his budget on Tuesday we learned that borrowings will actually be in the vicinity of \$28 billion, a figure seven times that which he promised Queenslanders. These borrowings are not an investment in our state's economy; nor will they contribute to the cost of building infrastructure or creating jobs. As I and others on this side pointed out earlier, there will be no net gain in wealth or value—just more economic pain for our children and our grandchildren.

Around 97 per cent of all businesses in this state are small businesses, and in my electorate alone there are more than 4½ thousand of them. They are the backbone of our economy, and we need to do more for them. If we support small business they will do the heavy lifting by driving employment and economic growth, but this government has again proven that it has no interest in supporting the mums and dads who make up a large proportion of our small, family-run businesses. These are families that are working hard—making sacrifices—to improve their lot, to employ people and to give back to the community.

What does the Labor Party do for small business? It smashes them with increased taxes, higher costs and more red tape. In its last budget, Labor's nine new or increased taxes ripped almost \$4 billion out of the Queensland economy. This year COVID has delivered another hammer blow but, instead of giving our small businesses a lifeline and giving businesses more time to get back on their feet, Labor has yet again failed to provide the right economic conditions to allow them to thrive.

According to the state's peak business advocacy group, the CCIQ, Labor's budget is a missed opportunity. It has failed to deliver the immediacy that is required to build business confidence in the short term and lay the foundation for a job-creating, business-led recovery in the long term. We can thank our federal colleagues for doing much of the heavy lifting that has helped keep the blood flowing through the veins of small business during the health crisis, but, given the state's bleak economic outlook, what will happen when JobKeeper payments dry up in March?

Labor had an opportunity to dispel its anti-business sentiment and provide some salvation by waiving payroll tax, but that is not the Labor way. Just as soon as the green shoots of recovery from a COVID inspired recession emerge, businesses will be smashed by their accrued payroll tax debt. Is it any wonder Queensland had the highest number of business bankruptcies in the nation during the last term of this government?

In this budget, Labor has proven yet again that it is no friend of small business. When the Treasurer commented that he does not like to borrow money, I almost fell off my chair. Debt and borrowing money are part of the Labor Party's DNA. When Labor runs out of money, it comes after yours. Labor has form when it comes to reneging on its promises, fudging the figures and glossing over the facts. In fact, it has become a hallmark of this Labor administration.

The Labor Party has been exposed. As the tide goes out, its members have been caught with their pants down—again. As I have said many times in this House, the two highest priorities of any government are the safety and security of its citizens and to provide an economic environment in which its citizens can prosper. On these highest priorities, Labor has failed across the board—systemically, profoundly and unforgivably. To add to that pain, this Labor government has also breached the trust of

Queenslanders, who this year have been forced to completely change the way they live their lives. They have done so courageously and with the utmost trust that the government would do everything it could to protect them.

Queensland will always be a great place to live, no matter how reckless this government is in breaking promises or managing the books. We will love this state. Sadly, in 2040, when those opposite are sitting on union boards in semi-retirement, my girls will be trying to get jobs in an economy that will not be all it could be. They probably will not know the best Queensland they could have. We have seen the writing on the wall with this budget. In the first four weeks of this term we have seen what the next four years will be like—four lost years, four years that set Queensland behind. This is the legacy of this Palaszczuk Labor government, a legacy that will be borne by all our kids and grandkids and for generations to come.