




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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APPROPRIATION (COVID-19) BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (3.48 pm): The people of Logan work every day to keep their families safe. They see that as their job. I see myself as working every day to keep safe the health and the jobs of the people of the Logan electorate. Never has my job in this House been more relevant or more valid than at this time when both of those things are under threat. I note that sometimes the federal government gives bills fancy names that create emotion. If the Appropriation (COVID-19) Bill 2020 that I stand up for had a subtitle it would be 'keeping Logan families safe and keeping Logan families working', because that is what this bill is about. As the chair of the Economics and Governance Committee, it is my job to examine bills before the House that keep Logan safe, that protect the health of its people and that fight for their jobs. Extra appropriation is vital to keep the people of Logan safe and healthy, and to fight for the jobs of Logan. This bill authorises the Treasurer to transparently fund the departments so that they can provide the special response that we need to keep Logan and Queensland safe.

Firstly and soberly, we should recognise what we do not need special funds for. I emphasise that it is important to recognise what we do not have to fund. In this first wave, we do not have to fund the digging of mass graves or the transportation of thousands of bodies to lonely funerals that family cannot attend. We do not have to fund those things because we funded things that are vital to our public services to test, to trace, to isolate and to get the cooperation of the community. We will not be building field hospitals as they have done in Italy. We will not have to send refrigerator trucks to the backs of hospitals as they are doing in New York. Because we have not had to fund those things, we can continue to fund our health network and support and plan for economic recovery.

Disingenuous speeches—and I say that charitably—have been made by opposition members. They say that this is a single line item without detail. From the announcements that have gone forward, we know and Queenslanders absolutely know of the \$4 billion package announced by the Treasurer on 4 March. That package includes \$1.2 billion to expand the fever clinics. Similar to the member for Sandgate, I have seen the Logan fever clinic in action. It was like something out of a movie or a war zone. Day after day we have seen the number of cases dropping. The package has funded an expansion of emergency department capacity and acute care services. Something that has not yet been recognised is the regional aeromedical services for remote communities, supporting people who could be affected in the future.

The package provides \$300 million for cost-of-living relief for households, which the minister for energy spoke about this morning, providing a \$200 credit for 2.1 million households to offset the cost of utilities. Those are important measures that give families in Logan and families throughout Queensland the confidence that the economy will improve and that they should continue to invest in and be part of an active community.

The package contains \$2.5 million for measures including payroll tax relief. We know that those opposite hated the Treasurer's payroll tax relief measures in the last budget. They really bit deeply. They seem to hate that the Treasurer is again giving very generous payroll tax relief. We know that they

could not achieve that, but this Treasurer has delivered for small and medium sized businesses—indeed, in this crisis she is delivering for all businesses across Queensland. There is relief for businesses renting government premises, a worker displacement program to help unemployed people get jobs—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr POWER: They do not like what is being said, because they will not back Queensland in this time of crisis. I have spoken about the electricity bill rebates. There is also the liquor licence fee waiver. I know how tough licenced businesses are doing it. There is assistance to support large businesses to scale up when economic activity improves. The package also includes funding towards the \$500 million job support loan facility and for land tax relief. There is the \$27 million coronavirus aid package that was announced on 18 February and rental support for residential tenants facing hardship. Additional funding of \$3.8 billion will be sought in 2019-20. This is a large quantum, but we know how vital it is. As I said, the bill's subtitle is 'keeping Queenslanders safe and fighting for Queensland jobs'.

We know that whatever our response, whether by testing, tracing and isolating or by investing in preparations, the stronger our public health response and the stronger our community response the quicker we will reduce the number of cases. It is that equation that means that we will have a strong economic recovery; a recovery that will be as strong as it can be. In this place we should have one purpose: to have a strong public health response and a strong community response where we ask everyone to ensure their own personal safety and that of their families. In that way we will reduce the number of cases even more, meaning that we can have an even stronger economic recovery. I endorse this bill because it makes Logan healthier, it makes Logan stronger and it leads the way to the recovery of Logan jobs.