




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Record of Proceedings, 9 September 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.19 pm): I have had an enforced period of reflection as I listened to a few speeches. It is interesting that, when any of those opposite talk about uniting and recovering in terms of the budget and our economy, the one thing that will not come from their lips is any mention of COVID-19 and its impact on our economy. They have one trite line, which is to blame others, saying that they use it as an excuse. We need to confront the reality of the historic challenges facing us.

The federal government is stepping up by increasing its deficit from \$500 billion, which is roughly where it is now. According to Peter Costello, it could reach over \$1 trillion. Those are sobering deficits that the federal government is running. Those opposite talk about running cheaper taxes. The member for Burleigh said that we need to lecture the federal government about taking in more than they spend. It is very disappointing to hear such things. They are also things that are never applied to the federal government, but it goes further. If any member opposite wants to use a figure that includes any debt that is resolved in things that are not government debt, in the same sentence they should reveal that the debt of the federal government includes things such as the debt on the NBN, but none of them have the honesty to do that. None of them will be able to do that.

As I said, those opposite will not confront the realities that Queensland faces. They will not look at the struggle that this whole nation—not just Queensland—faces with COVID-19. I heard the Treasurer quote Sheraan Underwood from Deloitte Access Economics. Obviously that quote slipped by some members opposite so I will repeat it. When looking at the data on various nations, Sheraan Underwood noted that those that had the best economic results also had the best COVID results. He put it in a simple sentence that I think is really important for those opposite to hear. He stated—

The underlying equation is simple. The greater the success against the virus, the greater the success in protecting economies against the pandemic.

We see that the nations that have been successful in reducing the spread of the pandemic have a smaller reduction in their growth rate. Those nations that have had a terrible response to the pandemic have much worse economic outcomes. We see that in Australia. When we look at the states, South Australia and Queensland lead the pack in terms of suffering the least damage. Those opposite need to realise that this is a huge challenge for our state. Pretending that it does not exist will do nothing to address the struggles that we face.

We have to think about the alternatives. Let us think of what would have happened if we had listened to the LNP about opening the borders. The member for Burleigh had billboards asking for it. They called 64 times for the borders to be opened. Let us focus on that. Not only did they call for the borders to be opened; they called for that to give certainty to Victorians so that they could book their holidays and arrive at tourist hotspots in our cities and coastal towns from 1 July. That is what they said the Queensland government should do. We would have had tens of thousands of Victorians here. I

remember during the debate they said how wonderful it would be if, on 1 July, we had all of those people visiting coastal towns and tourist hotspots, no doubt including the Barcaldine Workers Heritage Centre. That would have been an economic disaster.

I recognise that the member for Everton has had 64 opportunities—it is probably more, but I am making a rhetorical point so members will give me a bit of a break—to reveal the LNP's plan to pay for their billions and billions of dollars worth of commitments.

An honourable member: \$23 billion.

Mr POWER: I take the interjection: \$23 billion. The member for Everton has had 64 opportunities to stand here and be honest about that. They have the magic pudding economy. They say that there will be no debt, no deficit, no spending and no borrowing, but we know that it does not add up. The people of Queensland know that those opposite want to bury their heads in the sand about COVID-19. They want to bury their heads in the sand about getting right the coordination between our health response and our economic response. On top of that, they have absolutely ignored 64 opportunities to reveal how they will fund their commitments. We on this side have seen that and the people of Queensland have seen it. We know that when they were last in government they sold \$10 billion worth of assets without asking the people. They sacked 14,000 people, including 1,800 nurses. We know their record so we also know that they are not telling us the whole story about how they will cut, sack and sell. They have a record of doing that in government.

When they were in government, they increased debt by \$7 billion. The member for Burleigh told us that we need to spend less than we take in, but they increased debt by \$7 billion. We know that they sacked 14,000 public servants and we know that they sold off Queensland government assets.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr POWER: It was \$10 billion before the election. They increased taxes by more than \$3 billion. Their promises are hollow. Their promises are not believed by the people of Queensland. They are not taken seriously by the people of Queensland because they will not reveal their plan and they will not take COVID-19 seriously.

As I said earlier when speaking on the public service bill, we know that our fantastic public servants have kept us safe by doing the hard yards yet the opposition wants to attack them, traduce them and bring them down. Our nurses have stood up with masks and visors on their faces to take the samples that have detected COVID cases. Our fantastic police officers, such as the ones that the member for Lockyer used to direct, have taken on the responsibility of patrolling our borders to ensure that people follow the guidelines of our state. During this debate all we hear are their attacks on public servants. I recognise that in keeping our economy safe public servants have been on the front line. Whether it is contact tracers making phone calls and looking through data, whether it is our police officers or whether it is our nurses, all have done fantastic work.

I recognise that we need to see some facts about unemployment and we need to reflect upon a few trite lines. The reality is that we need to fight to create jobs. Before we faced COVID, our unemployment figures were much lower than those we were left with by the LNP. In fact, we had the lowest rate in eight years. Through that period 250,000 jobs were created. What is the LNP's record on jobs? I challenge any one of them to say how many jobs were lost during their period in government. We created 250,000 jobs. How many jobs were lost under the LNP? We will not hear about that from the LNP.

We know that recovery is going to be very volatile. The best way to analyse this is through the biggest survey, that is, the Australian Bureau of Statistics jobs and wages survey, which covers 99 per cent of large employers and 86 per cent of small businesses. That survey, which is the most accurate one, shows that between mid-April and 22 August in Queensland the number of jobs increased by 5.8 per cent. That is obviously much more than the national average. We look to recover that and continue to do that. The biggest thing we need to do is to keep our economy safe.

We have also heard about projections in the future. We need to note that the Queensland Treasury has forecast that 82,000 Queensland jobs will be added by June next year. To be honest, I am more confident that Queenslanders will do such a great job in recovering—they will unite and they will recover—that they will be out there generating jobs and encouraging the Queensland economy. I wanted to speak—

Mr Hunt: I thought you were done.

Mr POWER: No, I am never done when I have the Minister for Main Roads here. He has done such a great job in my electorate, where transport is so important. We know that there is spending in this budget for our roads, for example Waterford Tamborine Road. There are two projects underway on the Mount Lindesay Highway. One is the construction of four lanes between Rosia Road and Stoney

Camp Road. The minister knows that. That four-laning is really essential. Some 20 per cent of the traffic gets off at that exit. The other one is the four-laning going into Jimboomba. The northbound lanes will have a new flood reduced bridge that will mean much better connection on the Mount Lindesay Highway when we have floods, as well as four lanes at all other times. I wanted to mention that because I am gratuitously pushing the minister for more. I will continue do that.

We have recently completed the building of two ambulance stations. We have a former ambo in the room in the member for Thuringowa. He is so passionate about our Ambulance Service. I have gone to those stations and met those fantastic people who are passionate about looking after the people of Logan. The member for Thuringowa might ask how many ambulance stations the LNP built for our growing area.

Mr Harper: None.

Mr POWER: He knows it: the answer is none. They did not commit anything to our growing area.

People might know that I am a former schoolteacher. I am passionate about the transformation that education makes. I mention the schools we have built. We have built the Yarrabilba State School and the Yarrabilba State Community College. We are going to stage 2, which includes the new performing arts centre. On top of that, we have just announced the Greenbank North school and there are also new classrooms at Logan Village and Park Ridge. This is a growing area. Members might say, 'Well, member for Logan, this is a growing area; you are going to get classrooms and you are going to get new schools.' The question is: how many new classrooms were built under the LNP when its cuts came in? There were zero new classrooms for our growing area. Of course there were zero new schools, but there were also zero new classrooms for our growing area. They had no interest in our growing area and how much we wanted to do with it.

I also mention our police. The senior sergeants in our area are fantastic. They are committed to and integrated with our community. They have a great bunch of police officers who are fighting to keep their community safe. One of the most important things we did was expand the Yarrabilba Logan Village Police Beat into a full station, expanding the area massively and even having room for extra officers. They are doing a fantastic job in a new area, really expanding the services we deliver.

There is much more I could speak about with regard to what we have done and committed in our area, but I say to the people of Logan: let us not go backwards. In this challenging time, when we have to get our health right and our economy right, let us not go back to cutting, sacking and selling. That most hurts growing areas anywhere in Queensland. It hurt lots of areas that were not growing, but it hurt us in growing areas the most. That is why I am committed to these appropriation bills and to the Queensland government, which will unite and recover for Logan and for the entire state.