



Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Record of Proceedings, 9 September 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (4.58 pm): Welcome to Mr Elmes. The problem with the Labor Party is that when they do not like the history as it stands at the moment, they just go and rewrite it. I am glad that the member for Redlands mentioned pork-barrelling, because that whole speech basically outlined pork-barrelling in a Labor electorate. Millions and millions of dollars has obviously been spent in the electorate of Redlands. There is nothing being spent in my electorate of Burleigh. I am not sure what is happening in Mermaid Beach, but there is not a great deal being spent in Burleigh apart from the massive projects like light rail and the M1 upgrade—billions of dollars. There is none of the pork-barrelling type funding announcements being made in my patch.

The only reason we are discussing the Appropriation Bill on the second-last day of our sittings is that this government likes to hide things from the people of Queensland. They cancelled this year's budget after the former treasurer told us last year that she would deliver a budget in April. In April they apparently may well have had all the figures they needed even though the federal budget was not expected to be handed down by that time. In April they apparently would have had enough information to put a budget before the people of Queensland. It could have then been sent to committees, we could have run the estimates process and that would have allowed us to ask the difficult questions that they are now trying to dodge. Instead of that, they have scrapped the whole budget. They are not going to tell the people of Queensland just how much debt we are in. We quite simply cannot trust those opposite.

The member for Redlands mentioned the cut, sack, sell line that they keep going on about. The facts are that the LNP sold nothing. Who was it that sold Queensland assets? It was the Labor Party. The Premier of this state sat around that cabinet table.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (6.06 pm), continuing: Earlier when we adjourned the debate I was talking about the fact that the Labor Party has a habit of reinventing history. The member for Redlands said that the LNP government had this mantra of sack and sell and whatever else it is. The reality is that the only party that sold anything in Queensland is the Australian Labor Party. The Australian Labor Party sold \$16½ billion worth of assets of the people of Queensland after it told them it would not do that. It has a habit of misleading the people of Queensland. It sold the Queensland Motorways for \$3 billion. It sold the Abbot Point coal terminal for \$1.8 billion. The member for Inala—our present Premier—was sitting around the cabinet table when it sold QR National for \$4 billion. It sold a whole lot of energy assets and sold the Golden Casket. It sold Sungas. It sold Sun Retail. It sold Allgas for \$530 million—\$16.5 billion worth of assets of the people of Queensland without telling them. This is

absolute proof that the Queensland Labor Party misleads the people of Queensland and it is attempting to do that again with this Appropriation Bill. That is the reason the government will not bring down a budget.

Labor has delayed the 2020-21 budget until after the state election, meaning that the bill would not likely pass until 2021, so we are here tonight extending the current budget to cover that period. Under this bill, there is unforeseen expenditure of \$1.114 billion from the Consolidated Fund for that unforeseen expenditure and that is to do with 13 departments from the 2019-20 budget that overspent their budgets. The interim supply budget for 2021 is due to the postponement of that 2021 budget from January 2021. The additional interim supply is roughly \$28.6 billion for government expenditure and \$50 million—because this is a cognate debate—for the Parliamentary Service.

When we debated the Appropriation Bill 2020 the then treasurer at the time said that there would be \$3 billion worth of spending, but this government did not identify where it was going to spend that money. It appears our current Treasurer is telling us exactly the same thing. It is a little unclear. There is another \$3 billion. Is it a \$6 billion slush fund that the Labor Party are putting aside so they can pork barrel into their own seats during this election campaign and try to hoodwink the people of Queensland or is it only \$3 billion? Maybe somebody over there—somebody who can actually read a budget sheet; although I doubt there is anybody over there who can—can tell us whether it is \$6 billion or \$3 billion they are going to pork barrel into Queensland and what exactly that pork-barrelling may look like.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting.

Mr HART: We all know that before coronavirus hit Queensland we had the highest unemployment rate, the largest government debt, the lowest business confidence and the highest bankruptcy in the nation. That is because we have a Labor government. The Labor Party has no economic plan, it has no budget, so it has no plan moving forward. It is quite clear. Instead of the normal practice of the government providing us with a roughly 1,000-page budget that we can go through, tear apart and ask questions about, they have given us a 41-page glossy brochure. There are 234,000 Queenslanders out of work under this Labor government.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. There is too much cross-chamber chatter.

Mr HART: There is no more damning statistic than 234,000 Queenslanders out of work because this Labor government cannot manage our economy. On Monday the Premier had an opportunity to match the LNP's no new tax guarantee and she failed to do that. That is because the plan of those opposite is to increase taxes in Queensland. Over the last few years they have increased over nine taxes. They went to the election telling the people of Queensland they would not be raising taxes. but they went and did it. The people of Queensland cannot get any sense from this statement they have put out as to what is going to come in the future.

We all remember that this government raided the Public Service superannuation fund. They took billions of dollars out of that fund. They geared up our government owned corporations with debt, debt and more debt. They put billions of dollars in their kitty and told us that they were going to pay down debt, but debt has not gone down; it has, in fact, gone up. No doubt they will blame COVID-19 for this debt rise, but it is their incompetence that has led to this.

The Premier and the Treasurer at the time put out a set of fiscal principles that they said their government would operate to. The first one was reducing government debt to revenue. That has been a complete failure. The debt to revenue ratio has exploded from 63 per cent in the MYFER to 108 per cent this financial year. They said they would target net operating surpluses. Again that has been a complete failure. Labor's \$8.1 billion budget deficit is the worst in Queensland's history. They said they would have a consistent capital program. No, that has not happened. In fact, they have cut their capital program, cutting infrastructure projects, at the expense of Queensland jobs. They said they would maintain competitive taxation. No, that has not happened either. They have failed on every one of these principles. Labor has introduced nine new taxes. They have ripped \$4 billion out of the Queensland economy because of these nine new taxes they have put in place. They said they would limit Public Service growth. No, they have not done that either. While population growth is forecast to increase at 1.25 per cent, the public sector has grown by 2.2 per cent.

The key point of this budget is that in six years Labor has racked up a record \$102 billion of debt because it has lost control of spending. The reality is that they have lost control of spending. They have put us in debt well over \$100 billion. Every dollar of that debt is money that cannot be spent to recover from COVID-19. Right at a time when we need the economy to get back on track, this government has put us in a fiscal position where that is going to be impossible.

It is not surprising that this government has put us into a fiscal position like this when we have the member for Woodridge as the Treasurer. We all remember that train wreck interview on 9 July when the new Treasurer—who was very, very clearly out of his depth—did not know the Queensland debt level, he did not know how many public servants were on his payroll, he did not know what size the Future Fund would be or how much money Labor would be raiding from the Queensland Public Service superannuation scheme. He could not name any of these things or how much savings the now defunct Service Priority Review Office delivered in the last financial year. He was quizzed about these things and he did not have an answer. It is not unusual for leaders of the Labor Party in Queensland to not have an answer. We all remember when the Premier of the state was asked what the GST rate was. I could talk to my two-year-old granddaughter and she would be able to tell me what the GST rate is in Australia, but our Premier, sadly, could not tell us that.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Miller has been regularly interjecting. I will start to name members.

Mr HART: Unlike the Labor Party, the LNP has a number of fiscal principles. We will strive to be the lowest taxing government in the nation by guaranteeing no new taxes and a 10-year royalty freeze. That will boost business confidence, attract more investment and create jobs. These are the things that really create jobs. We will target fiscal balances across the economic cycle by limiting general government expenditure to less than revenue. There is a surprising fact that those opposite might like to understand: you spend less than you earn. It is an unusual concept, I know, to those opposite: you spend less than you earn.

Mr Power: You've run deficits every time. You ran deficits every time you were in government.

Mr HART: This is the problem with the Australian Labor Party: if the story does not fit their narrative they reinvent history. Those of us who were elected in 2012 remember the legacy that was left behind by the Bligh government that caused a massive black hole in the budgets of Queensland for the three years that we were in government.

The Australian Labor Party has been in government since 2015, it is now 2020 and we are \$100 billion in debt. There is no economic plan to recover from that debt. They have a massive slush fund and no doubt we will see a conga line of their members standing in this place to tell us how much money is being spent in their electorates in an attempt to con the people of Queensland into re-electing them on 31 October. The people of Queensland know what they need to do.