




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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ADJOURNMENT

Burnett Electorate, Coronavirus; Paradise Dam

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (10.22 pm): As I did not get an opportunity to speak in the debate because of the guillotine motion, I really want to put on the record some issues around the bill just passed by the House. It is devastating to see that Bundaberg and Burnett businesses have concerns about signing up to the JobKeeper payments. Local businesses are not signing up because the state government is refusing to waive payroll tax. JobKeeper payments should be a lifeline for many businesses but end up costing already struggling family businesses. We have just come through the worst years—droughts, floods and fires—and of course we want to make sure that these businesses realise the sad reality of acknowledging that there is nothing left in the bank. Many small and micro businesses have been struggling through the drought and fires and simply have nothing left. The only option for these businesses is to join the queue at Centrelink, but we can do so much more. We need to waive payroll tax.

On behalf of the local chamber of commerce, I want to point out some issues. Our community is not happy with the state stimulus package in these terms—job support loans, significant burden on cash flows to produce the necessary documentation; land tax rebate, many of our businesses do not own their buildings and find land owners unwilling to renegotiate in terms of catch-up payments not being what they need for normal trade; market diversification, resilient brands are not looking for exports but just to survive; wage subsidies, they have enough trouble keeping the doors open let alone putting on more staff; asset write-off, again they need money to purchase this new equipment; and early access to super is not a good thing. Many of these people do not have super. We need to do more. Give lockdown workers free online training and waive the gambling tax for our service clubs crying out for help. Immediately release \$500 million for road projects. Waive all licences and registration renewals for real estate agents. Land tax relief has to be a must. More importantly, we need a bulk water price freeze. Let us make sure irrigation is affordable.

Today, we tried in vain to introduce amendments to the bill in terms of reducing the spillway at Paradise Dam by five metres. This is a really crucial issue. An international expert, Dr Paul Rizzo, told the government's commission of inquiry that there is a solution to stabilising the major spillway. We really do call on the Palaszczuk Labor government to cease and desist all work until we can do more testing, establish that the stabilisers, the anchors and other works that have been done in other dams around the world will work and provide us a solution.

The call tonight is to make sure we put a 12-month moratorium on any works on Paradise Dam. Let us get all the experts back out there and ensure that we are establishing the best practice and model for Paradise Dam. We know that the \$100 million proposed by the Palaszczuk government to reduce the spillway by five metres is excessive. We know that there are solutions, but we need everyone to work together to make sure that the economic security of water security remains the No. 1 priority for the people of the Bundaberg and Burnett region.