




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2); APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.43 pm): I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2). What we are really looking at here is the question of what is a deficit. We have heard a lot of chatter from those on the Labor side: ‘We have to spend this money.’ This is intergenerational theft. The facts of the matter are that if you spend more than you earn someone will have to pay that money back and someone will have to pay interest on that money. At \$90-odd billion that someone is going to be our children, our grandchildren, our nieces and our nephews because we will not be in this place as the \$90 billion debt is reduced.

If the government put their budget together and then they come in here and ask for \$1.397 billion extra just a few months later, they have to ask themselves what is going on with their expenditure. I had one of my schools here today—Mater Dei—and they have a couple of aspiring politicians. If we do not arrest this debt, by the time they get to 18 the debt will be over \$100 billion. This is a ridiculous amount of money compared with our ability to raise revenue. We have seen taxes increase and we have not seen spending being controlled.

One area where we have seen spending increase in this bill as part of the nearly \$4 billion extra is the police—\$28 million. I want to talk a little bit about the police because the police have found themselves under extreme pressure in this state. We have seen the police budget as a percentage of the Queensland budget reduce. When we look at the reduction as a percentage it does not seem much. It is just a couple of points. It goes from 4.28 to 3.89. That equates to \$230-odd million a year—\$1.71 billion over the five years of this Labor government.

When people see the crime rate climbing across our state, when they are shaking in their boots as they lock their door at night—I met up with some people in Bundaberg who are terrified in their own home after being broken into and then violently assaulted—you have to ask yourself: why has the police budget not kept pace with Queensland’s budget as it increases? More importantly, why has the number of police per head of population not kept up with the number we had? We had 245 officers per 100,000 when the LNP were in government. We now have 233 per 100,000. That is 610 fewer officers across the state on a per head of population basis. That means that there are fewer police to patrol the streets. It means that there are fewer people to arrest.

Not only has there been a weakening of the law; the budget has not kept pace with our growing population and the numbers of police have not kept pace with our growing population. Not only are we asking future generations, our children, to pay the debt that has been ramped up by this Treasurer; we are also asking them to live in fear. We all, I am sure, have seen the report of an assault on a young girl in Cairns yesterday, as reported widely in the media. This young girl is going to be one of the people who will be paying back this \$90 billion worth of debt. Honestly, as she was assaulted yesterday by these people putting their hands in her pockets and ripping her money out, I do not think she will appreciate this House doing that to her as she becomes a taxpayer of Queensland.

This government needs to learn to live within its means. The government cannot increase taxes by \$3.5 billion, ripping extra money out of the economy, and then come back into this place shortly after introducing its budget asking, ‘Please, sir, can I have some more?’ People are having to spend their

own money to get CCTV and to get security screens put on their houses. Businesses are having to hire security guards. This is crippling our economy. Not supporting the police properly is costing every Queenslanders more money. Not only has the Labor government got its hand in every Queenslanders pocket, ripping out more money because it cannot manage expenditure; people are also having to run scared when they are closing their businesses at night and they have to take the takings home with them in their car.

In Toowoomba we had a guy who had locked up his business, his wife had picked him up, they had their young child in the car and they were pursued through the streets of Toowoomba for the takings. This is Queensland. We should make sure that the police have the money and to have it appropriated properly in the first place. The fact that there is some extra money for the police in Appropriation Bill (No. 2) makes me wonder why the police needed it.

Could it be that they had to fund the watch house job because of the extra resources that were needed for watch houses when 17-year-olds were taken out of the prison system and put into the juvenile justice system without any preparation or planning at all? Is one of the reasons to pay the overtime bill for watch houses? Is it to pay the police up in Townsville their overtime so they can take some of the youth offenders they are trying to arrest fishing and to football games? Is that why this extra money has been appropriated? Is it to cover that, or is it to cover vacancies in AO and PLO positions which have been held open across the state and not filled?

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is not being relevant. The reasons for the unforeseen expenditure are detailed in the bill. I draw the member's attention to that rather than hypothesising about something that is not actually in the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Member, I will draw your attention back to the bill. You have three minutes left; spend it wisely.

Mr WATTS: Let us have a look at what is going on with this expenditure. As I said before, taxes have been increased by \$3.5 billion, yet that is not enough for this government. They cannot keep their budget on track. They are \$1.397 billion over budget. This government is addicted to other people's money. This government cannot learn to live within its means. The outcome of not living within your means is that you burden a future generation with taxes for the services and facilities we receive. The member for Maryborough was telling us about all of the things that are going on in Maryborough. I am sure that when the children of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs pay the interest bill on the taxes of the debt bomb they inherit they will be pleased to know that the member for Maryborough had all of these services delivered. The simple fact is that if you run the government efficiently and effectively you can get better outcomes without blowing the budget. We have seen that extra expenditure go into our hospitals and roads but we have seen poorer outcomes.

There is a dire warning from the Auditor-General, Brendan Worrall, who states in his report, 'Unless the Queensland government can increase its revenue'—that is code for extra taxes—'or constrain the recent growth in its expenses'—that is code for really poor management and waste—'it risks not being able to meet the costs of its activities from the revenue it earns going forward.' The children of Queensland need to prepare themselves because the warning is very clear. The Auditor-General said 'it risks not being able to meet the costs of its activities from the revenue it earns going forward'.

If there is not enough money there, people are going to miss out, and it will not be our generation that misses out. I see a lot of heads bent opposite me; they know it is their children who will be paying this bill. It is their children, their grandchildren and their nieces and nephews who will be paying this bill. The interest on this bill would provide so many services and facilities to the people of Queensland on a daily basis, but all we do is send a cheque off to a merchant bank somewhere that will lend us the money. Rather than deliver health outcomes or schools and education we just send the money off—

(Time expired)