




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (3.21 pm): I rise to speak on the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. This bill shows that the Palaszczuk Labor government is focused on ensuring that prudent fiscal responsibility continues to be the hallmark of this administration. We have heard from those opposite about their doom-and-gloom forecast for our state and we on this side of the chamber accept that it is pretty hard to have to stare into the electoral abyss delivered upon them by the people of Queensland—we get that—but really?

Those opposite ask why the people of Queensland made the choice at the last election, but the people of Queensland saw that it was only this side of the House that had an eye on the threat unfolding around us. It was the Palaszczuk Labor government that showed leadership at a time of great need and gave the people of Queensland—in particular the regions, including the electorate of Hervey Bay—the direction needed to take us through one of the worst crises this state and indeed this country has had to face for generations. It showed that this government wisely set about ensuring that, where possible, the government kept itself flexible, nimble and dynamic and it continues to keep government lean and mean to respond and recover for the coming years.

The bill outlines several measures to maintain this responsible fiscal management. With the measures outlined in the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021, the government is continuing to set out a path that makes certain that, coming off the back of a strong health response to COVID-19, we pivot towards a strong economic recovery, and the proof is in the results. The recovery in Queensland has been impressive. Queensland has bounced back stronger and faster than any other state within Australia.

Let us put this into perspective. International countries are still locked down. We have seen horrendous scenes of despair from countries like India and Brazil. We see the USA and the UK struggling to get on top of COVID-19, damaging their citizens and their economies. Other states are recovering, but the Palaszczuk Labor government has put Queensland at the top of that list. Because of the Premier's leadership, we are safer and stronger.

We are in no way totally secure from further outbreaks, but the Palaszczuk government led the way in making sure the borders were closed when needed—a sensible and safe approach. This is in stark contrast to the opposition, which wanted the borders open. That is just shameful and has proven to be plainly wrong. Let us contemplate what those actions, if taken, would have done to Queensland. It would have brought Queensland to a stop. Queenslanders would have been more seriously ill, their businesses closed and our hospitals overrun with the sick and potentially the dying. This government's safe and strong management has succeeded. It has succeeded in ensuring that all Queenslanders benefit from the economic recovery underway here and bills like the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 will enable Queensland to remain strong.

The objectives of the bill are to support the state's contribution to the Queensland Future (Debt Retirement) Fund; to abolish Building Queensland and the Building Queensland board and integrate Building Queensland staff, assets, records and resources into the Department of State Development,

Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning; to change the governance structure of the National Injury Insurance Agency; to repeal the Public Safety Business Agency Act so that machinery-of-government changes may reintegrate the Public Safety Business Agency into public safety entities; to abolish the Queensland Productivity Commission and integrate its functions into Treasury Queensland; and to mandate that legislation that requires or authorises print advertising or publication by government agencies will be satisfied by digital electronic advertising or publication, subject to appropriate exemptions.

As mentioned, the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 will implement a range of debt reduction and savings measures identified as part of the Palaszczuk government's savings reduction plan. This legislation provides the mechanism for the Queensland Titles Registry to be transferred to the Queensland Future Fund through the Debt Retirement Fund. The inclusion of the Queensland Titles Registry in the Debt Retirement Fund will improve the state's debt-to-revenue ratio when assessed by ratings agencies and demonstrates the Palaszczuk government's measured and responsible plan to invest today to pay down state debt into the future.

This bill does more on this front. It ensures that a public asset like the Titles Registry is secured in public ownership and that it will not be sold off by a future LNP government to satisfy its privatisation and asset-selling agenda that always appears and will definitely reappear with Campbell Newman and Lawrence Springborg back behind the scenes. Yes, the puppet-masters are back to get their hands on our assets with the full support of the Leader of the Opposition, who has form on this when he sat around the cabinet table ruling lines through the livelihoods of decent, hardworking Queenslanders, many in the Hervey Bay electorate.

That is why those opposite hate the bill, because with this bill the Titles Registry is placed, rightly so, into the state's Future Fund—working for all Queenslanders and making sure that the Queensland taxpayer will get the full value of the Titles Registry on the people's balance sheet for all Queenslanders and not for one of its LNP corporate mates who are hankering to get their private hands on the funds. Sorry, guys. It will be on our balance sheet offsetting debt, not being sold off under some fake argument for asset sales and privatisation. The people of the Hervey Bay electorate remember the cutting, the selling and the sacking of those opposite. They will never forget. I worked in one of those departments at the time as I watched in horror—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Order! Pause the clock. Cease your interjections, members. I cannot hear the member on his feet.

Mr TANTARI: I worked in one of those departments at the time as I watched in horror as those opposite, particularly the now opposition leader, the member for Broadwater, and his mates, slowly privatised everything in sight, destroying the fabric of regional communities by sacking government workers, slashing government-run employment programs and removing millions of dollars out of community groups.

I watched as good men and women were left waiting every day, mute from fear, hoping that they would not be tapped on the shoulder, that the fabled 'box man' would not turn up at their desks and stand over them, giving them 15 minutes to clean out their stuff as they were escorted out the door—disproportionally, I might add, of those who had union membership, particularly of the Public Service Together union—destroying their career of service and loyalty to the Queensland people. It was shameful, just shameful.

We will not forget the health workers—the nurses, the midwives and the administration officers like Jason and Wendy. I will never forget what the LNP reaped on them—lost jobs, careers and families destroyed, regions decimated. For them I stand here and fight to keep the LNP from ever doing that again—union strong, union proud.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr TANTARI: Did they care less? No. In the pursuit of their privatising agenda, the list of destruction—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Mudgeeraba, cease your interjections across the chamber please.

Mr TANTARI: Did they care less? No. In the pursuit of their privatising agenda, the list of destruction to regional Queensland by those opposite was endless and they did not care what that meant to jobs and livelihoods. Thankfully the voters of Queensland said that enough is enough and removed one of the worst governments in living memory from being in charge of our future. It is important to realise that this bill is to make sure that government is reducing those overall costs of what is considered now to be outdated and needing modification.

Another area of the bill that will increase savings for Queenslanders is to allow digital advertising to replace print advertising. The measure is intended to reduce the quantity of print advertising and publications by government agencies and to reduce associated advertising and publication costs to government agencies. Governments need to move with the times and the reality is that people are increasingly getting their news online. Some notices will still be exempt from the advertising changes and they will include public health and safety matters, communities served by regional newspapers, matters related to courts and tribunals, firearms amnesties and matters relating to specific locations or people.

The Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021 implements public sector efficiency and moderation and is a sensible and measured way to ensure public assets work harder for the people. The bill restructures several public entities as part of the Palaszczuk government's ongoing commitment to deliver savings and provide efficiency in government. The amalgamation and restructure of public entities into existing government departments means that their specialised expertise roles and responsibilities will be transferred to develop relevant departments and to better drive outcomes for the community in the public sector.

That is right: they will continue to build a vibrant and resilient public sector—those dirty words that those opposite shudder to say. Let me repeat: public sector. These are the men and women who, on a day-to-day basis, deal in the currency of public betterment and service, not profit and greed. The Palaszczuk government values these individuals and what they do to make this state a better place to live and grow. This bill will ensure that there will be job security; it is about protecting jobs and building community. I congratulate the Premier for her strong leadership and ensuring that prudent fiscal responsibility continues to be the hallmark of this administration, along with growing jobs, building assets and keeping Queenslanders and the Hervey Bay electorate safe and strong. I commend the bill to the House.