




Speech By  
**Ali King**

**MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE**

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## **SUPERANNUATION (STATE PUBLIC SECTOR) (SCHEME ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (4.24 pm): I rise in support of the Superannuation (State Public Sector) (Scheme Administration) Amendment Bill 2021. QSuper is Australia's third largest super fund, with \$120 billion in total assets, and Sunsuper is the eighth largest, with \$75 billion in total assets. The proposed merger that we are looking at today in this legislation will establish Australia's second largest superannuation fund, coming in behind only AustralianSuper and to be known as MySuper. The merged fund, as we have heard, will have \$224 billion in assets and two million members, mainly Queenslanders.

Our Palaszczuk government supported this merger under important conditions, including, among others, that it must be in the best interests of members and that members and stakeholders were kept informed. Like many, if not most, members of this House, I declare that I am a member of QSuper and can confirm that I have been kept very fully informed of developments. I particularly want to commend the Treasurer's insistence that the newly merged mega super fund will continue to be based in Queensland. The merged fund will compete nationally, but its headquarters will remain in Brisbane, and the registered office, the main office and most of the trustee's business areas will remain in Queensland.

In securing this guarantee our government is supporting and protecting over 2,000 Queensland jobs which, of course, is a key value of Labor governments. Not only will existing jobs be protected, but also new jobs will be created for the future, economic benefits to members will be identified in uptake of technology and the benefits of the fund's bigger scale will be passed on through higher returns, as supported by the Productivity Commission's report. All of this means increased account balances for members, higher retirement incomes and a boost to all-important economic activity here in Queensland.

This merger also benefits Queensland by strengthening our Queensland financial sector which, of course, has been traditionally dominated by southern capitals. Our new MySuper fund will create a financial powerhouse that will help supercharge a burgeoning financial services industry here in Queensland. We have seen during COVID that Queensland is absolutely the place to be and it is absolutely the place to do business, and this bill facilitating the merger creates a springboard for the future growth of this important sector.

The bill also protects our fully funded defined benefit scheme, something we have heard about and something that is unique in Australia. To compare our scheme to other states, New South Wales is currently \$68 billion in deficit leading to the New South Wales government engaging in high-risk investments under the now Premier and former treasurer to try to make up that gap, while Victoria has a \$31.2 billion shortfall and even Western Australia remains \$7 billion short of full funding. Labor is looking to the future. We ensured and continue to ensure that our defined benefit scheme is fully funded. The boards of QSuper and Sunsuper are looking to the future by pursuing this long and complex process of merger. With its two million members and its \$224 billion in investments, this bill will assist the new fund to deliver better outcomes for members by leveraging their massive combined savings to increase their profitability, efficiency and market power.

Labor has always looked to the future when it comes to retirement. We believe a lifetime of work should be recognised and respected. Labor was part of the very first government that implemented the first Australian age pension scheme back in 1908 ensuring a decent safety net for our elders. Superannuation has a proud Labor history. In the 1980s and 1990s Hawke and Keating reforms establishing compulsory super in Australia remain some of Labor's most enduring changes, hitting the sweet spot where economic and social change collide.

I note the member for Hervey Bay's comments that superannuation gives security and comfort to millions of Queenslanders, especially working-class people who would never otherwise have aspired to save for their retirement. I note that through family circumstances my own parents have no superannuation to rely on as they get older and I cannot tell you the comfort I would find in knowing they had more than the age pension to draw on as they age.

Superannuation has been a boon to so many people of my electorate of Pumicestone. Members have heard me say many times that we are the electorate with the highest proportion of people aged over 65 anywhere in Queensland, despite competition from the member for Hervey Bay. This bill will benefit a large number of retired and retiring public sector workers who reside in Pumicestone. Many members of our community in Pumicestone embarking on retirement have reason to be grateful that Labor had the foresight to commit to compulsory superannuation so many years ago and against considerable political opposition.

We have heard a lot today from the LNP on the topic of political opposition and their support for this bill but with the usual stale side serve of attacks on unions from the members for Buderim, Kawana et al.

**A government member** interjected.

**Ms KING:** Et cetera. It goes on and on and on. The member for Clayfield said, in particular, that superannuation is an integral part of the compact of employment, but I seek to question what his party's broader record of support for our superannuation system looks like. Shamefully, the LNP's history is one of constant attacks on and undermining of the superannuation system that is the backbone of the Commonwealth of Australia and that ensures a dignified and secure retirement.

In 2020 we heard from Queensland Liberal National Senator Gerard Rennick, who called Australia's \$3 trillion retirement savings funds the biggest rort in Australia. He said—

Of all the rorts that exist in this country, nothing compares to superannuation.

He also said, 'Superannuation is devouring the real economy.' This year he and other LNP politicians called for superannuation to be voluntary. He has called superannuation a 'lie'. He has called it 'lipstick on a pig'. He has called it a 'cancer'. I wonder which LNP members not speaking on this bill today share those views.

In 2020 the Morrison government passed a bill that retroactively legalised the theft of superannuation payments, allowing bosses who have ripped off their workers to get away scot-free. During COVID the Morrison government incentivised desperate and vulnerable people to take up to \$20,000 from their superannuation, without any oversight or assessment of need, consigning many, especially young people, to a poorer, meaner retirement.

The federal LNP has delayed promised superannuation increases, claiming that increasing superannuation contributions will undermine wages growth when we know that the real lid on wage increases is the LNP's own refusal to back real wage increases, particularly in the public sector. We have seen the constant dangling of superannuation raids as an option to get young people into an overheated housing market. While that may sound understandably attractive to young people, it will come at a huge cost to them in later decades when they reach retirement as they will have missed out on many years of compound interest.

Of course, the LNP's greatest ire is reserved for industry super funds. We have heard some of those attacks today, oddly enough by members who, in many cases, declared that they were members of QSuper, Sunsuper or both. All of their ideological whinges about union paymasters and board representation seemingly are not enough to make them cash out of high-performing funds that are run entirely for the benefit of members, like QSuper and Sunsuper.

Our strong retirement savings sector contributes hugely to our national economic health, and people having the best possible support in retirement is key to our Labor vision. This bill and the merger it supports will be beneficial to working people right across Queensland. It is good for Queensland jobs and industry, and it is good for our economic recovery after COVID-19. I commend the Treasurer, the chair and the committee. I commend the bill to the House.