




Speech By
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DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (3.12 pm): I rise to speak to the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. This bill demonstrates the complete lack of ambition of this government. This bill is 264 pages of shuffling the government deckchairs, of shuffling around various government entities, to save a measly \$3 million. While it arguably contains some small improvements, it presents some serious concerns.

The bill will turn the Titles Registry, currently a publicly owned asset, into a company and move it under the Debt Retirement Fund. A big concern is what moving the Titles Registry out of the Public Service will mean for workers. Together union has said that its members are concerned that their protection from liability will be significantly reduced after this bill is passed. It described—

On a daily basis, Registry employees make decisions that directly impact thousands of real estate transactions, the vast majority valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and some valued in the tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars. Accordingly, protection from personal liability is of the utmost importance to members.

It asks that the government amends the bill to ensure that the protection from liability provisions in the bill are identical to the provisions which currently apply to members under the Public Service Act.

I am very glad to hear that moving the Titles Registry into the Queensland Future Fund will help keep it in public hands, because Queenslanders will not stand for this government doing what their counterparts in Victoria did: privatising their Titles Registry in 2018 for a short-sighted \$2.86 billion.

We have also previously seen Queensland Labor privatise parts of Queensland Rail, the Port of Brisbane and Forestry Plantations Queensland. More recently, we have seen them selling off more than a thousand public homes. I hope that Queensland Labor stick to their word on keeping the Titles Registry in public hands.

The bill moves the productivity and regulatory review functions of the Queensland Productivity Commission into the Treasury. The explanatory notes to this bill say that this integration will enhance Treasury's economic policy capability and enable greater integration of the government's economic strategy. What this actually means in practice is that this removes the independence of the Queensland Productivity Commission, so now the government will oversee the body that writes the reports that scrutinise government decisions. We need more independent scrutiny of government, not less.

I am pleased to see that, after significant advocacy from Queensland tattoo artists and tattoo shops, the government has indicated it will withdraw the amendments related to regulation of tattoo ink that are included in this bill. A range of South Brisbane locals got in touch with my office over the last two weeks, outlining significant negative impacts that these changes would have on their local small businesses, so I wrote to the health minister and the Treasurer urging them to reconsider and to conduct thorough consultation with the industry. I am thankful that the government has taken this on board and has put a pause on these amendments to properly consult with local tattoo businesses and sole traders. These amendments had really good intentions around banning carcinogenic tattoo ink in Queensland, but it is crucial that the government works with the industry to find a way to do this without having such a negative impact on small businesses and sole traders.

To me, the most stark thing about this bill is how incredibly unambitious it is. We have just gone through a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, and the related economic crisis is not over. Our social housing waiting list is at record highs, growing by 7,000 people per year; more than a third of Queensland renters are in housing stress; and insecure employment and underemployment has grown to record levels—and this is the best the government can do?

Do not get me started on the opposition's response. They harped on for weeks and weeks, pretending to be concerned about social housing and how underfunded our public health system is, yet the only critique they now have of this bill is that it does not cut enough. To move amendments that only change the name of the bill when hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders are struggling is an absolute joke and is the reason people are switching off from politics. This bill and the LNP's response demonstrate the lack of imagination and narrow thinking that is all too common in this place.

During the pandemic the CEO of Glencore, one of Queensland's biggest coal producers, grew his wealth by \$500 million. Harry Triguboff, who has a significant property investment in Queensland, grew his wealth by a whopping \$1.7 billion. Mining corporations still exported \$45 billion worth of Queensland resources over the 2020-21 financial year. Despite a tumultuous year, the Commonwealth Bank was able to pay its CEO the equivalent of an estimated \$8.4 million. Yet here we are spending our time debating these 264 pages that will only save a measly \$3 million.

It is time for both sides of this House to have some bloody ambition, to go after the wealthiest in our state—mining corporations, big banks and property developers—

Ms PUGH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that language was unparliamentary. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Walker): Member for South Brisbane, do you withdraw?

Dr MacMAHON: I withdraw. They could go after the wealthiest in our state—mining corporations, big banks and property developers—and make them pay a little bit more to fund our economic recovery. Introducing a modest bank levy of just 0.05 per cent on the biggest five banks in Queensland would raise around triple what these 264 pages do in one year. The government could follow their Victorian counterparts and introduce a developer tax. A 75 per cent developer tax on increases in land value as a consequence of rezoning would bring in about five times what these 264 pages do in just one year. The staggering figure that could be raised by increasing mining royalties on coal, gas and minerals is in stark contrast to the measly \$3 million that we are arguing over today.

The Greens will support this bill today because it contains some small improvements, but I emphasise that Queensland needs this government to have more ambition than this bill and to have some courage—to stop just tinkering around the edges, to stop spending countless hours and resources shifting around the government deckchairs and instead start going after those in our state with obscene wealth and get them to pay their fair share.

If this government had some courage we could have properly funded essential services and infrastructure, we could have big investment building tens of thousands of new public homes and more funding for more teachers, doctors and nurses. We could create tens of thousands of good steady jobs by setting up a publicly owned renewable manufacturing industry or a mass build of publicly owned renewable energy. These bold ideas are what Queensland needs to drive our economic recovery, not the 260 pages of shuffling the government deckchairs.