




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise to speak on the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill. Every dollar counts. It is a simple phrase but it means something to Queenslanders. It means a lot to our Treasurer, our Premier, to the Palaszczuk Labor government, and it means a lot to me. It is a lesson that the Treasurer learned when he started his first job in 1982, and it is a lesson that I too learned when I started my first job in the year 2000 as a 15-year-old working at McDonald's in Rockhampton. I have now been working for almost 20 years, and for almost all of those 20 years I have been a proud member of my union. My first pay packet from McDonald's went towards saving for my first car, which after several years of working I was able to afford: a two-door second-hand Holden Barina that I bought from a woman in Gladstone who had won it at the Yaralla Sports Club, my lucky 'Betty Barina'.

I agree with the Treasurer: those dollars that I worked hard for mattered, hard work matters, prudence matters and savings matter. That is the lesson that lies at the heart of this bill. This bill is a comprehensive reform of the business and balance sheet of the Queensland government. It is designed to reduce the burden of debt and deliver savings. We are saving taxpayer dollars, restructuring our balance sheet by finding savings and reducing the burden of debt. We are doing that so we can invest to deliver services for all Queenslanders right across this state.

Unlike those opposite, we do not pursue savings and debt reduction as an end in itself. We do not cut doctors, nurses and midwives, we do not cut teachers and we do not cut police. The last time the LNP was in government it cut 14,000 public servants—4,000 health workers, of which 1,800 were midwives. In 2013, eight of the current LNP front bench—which equates to 44 per cent of the LNP's entire shadow ministry, almost half of the current shadow ministry—served in the Newman government as ministers, including the former member for Mundingburra, the current member for Broadwater, who was Campbell Newman's minister for local government.

But I digress. In 2013 my colleagues, who were all urban and regional planners, architects, project managers and surveyors who were working to deliver more social housing and community infrastructure in the department of public works, told me about a complete stranger to whom they gave the name 'Box Man'. They did not know 'Box Man'. They had never seen him before, but 'Box Man' would walk into their office on 80 George Street carrying cardboard boxes, tap random people on the shoulder and tell them to pack their stuff and get out. Hardworking professionals who had dedicated years of their working lives to delivering infrastructure and housing for Queensland were simply tapped on the shoulder, handed a box and told to leave. It was devastating for so many. The same sackings happened right across the state, including 1,400 nurses, midwives, healthcare professionals and teachers. Gladstone port workers, QBuild apprentices and tradies in Central Queensland lost their jobs because of the failed fiscal management of the Newman government.

When I was elected in 2015 my community in Keppel was hurting, as was the rest of Queensland, because of the LNP's cuts to workers. In contrast to the LNP's economic wasteland, Labor makes sensible, viable savings that benefit Queenslanders. Labor's prudent savings, identified in this bill, were uncovered on our own initiative to examine public costings and are expected to make sure our frontline

services—the very ones the LNP slashed and we had to rehire—are sustainable and focused on the needs of the public. Labor invests those funds for the good of every Queenslanders. It is an idea that the LNP hates because when they talk about savings what they really mean is cuts. We know that the LNP hates the idea of Queensland taxpayers soon getting the full value of the Titles Registry on our balance sheet. This strikes a blow at the LNP economic structure because it means they cannot sell off the Titles Registry. Make no mistake: the LNP is always keen to sell public assets. People in my community of Keppel, and indeed across Queensland, do not support the privatisation of the state's strategic assets.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms LAUGA: I take that interjection, because it is actually the reason I stand in this place. The reason I joined the Labor Party was to stop the privatisation of assets, as do all members on this side of the chamber. When the LNP was last in government they sold Queensland Motorways, they tried to sell our electricity assets and ports, and they wasted \$70 million of taxpayers' money on consultants to try and do that. This is exactly why I joined the Labor Party: not because I love the Labor Party, but because I wanted to change it. That is why I am standing in this place as part of a government that is proud to stand on our track record of backing our public servants, supporting frontline workers and, most importantly, stopping the sale of assets that 44 per cent of those on the LNP front bench wanted to sell off. That is why most of us on this side of the House are here.

Labor has promised Queenslanders that we will always keep our assets, and that includes the value of the Titles Registry as an asset that can be an offset against debt, thereby reducing our net debt. The LNP complains about deficits in Queensland, which has a booming economy, even though the Morrison government has a trillion dollar deficit 10 years into the future and beyond with no sign of a surplus. I am sure those 'Back in the Black' mugs Josh Frydenberg had made up a few years ago are in the trash. The LNP also complains about debt even though the New South Wales Liberal government has higher debt than Queensland, including when measured on a proposal basis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 20 years ago I learned an important lesson. Every dollar counts, and that lesson is just as important today as it was 20 years ago. I commend the bill to the House.