




Speech By  
**Corrine McMillan**

**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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**DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL**

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (4.33 pm): I rise to contribute to the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. I begin with the story of one of my constituents. Her name is Debbie. Here is what she has said—

We knew it was coming after hearing rumours about what Campbell Newman was about to do to public servants. After 28 years (at the time) of dedicated public service I never thought the important role I held within my department (the Queensland Police Service) would be cut.

On 7 January 2013, my colleagues and I were collected, one by one, by our manager, each returning to the office in tears. When my turn came I was told that my position was not required in the new structure of the department. I was devastated but stayed on to continue the work I performed at the time to assist the future of the work unit while knowing I would not be part of it.

Debbie goes on to say—

I arrived home that day to the loving arms of my family and thought my career was over. I felt like the Government at the time did not care about me when I considered myself a 'career public servant' who was looking to one day retire with 40+ years of service. I wondered how I would continue to provide for my family and would I be able to find another job. I had not known any other career apart from public service and for those years I had prided myself on the work I did and on my work commitment. I felt like I had lost a family member.

These were the words of one of my constituents after being sacked by the Newman government. We have heard those opposite criticise Labor's plans for saving and debt reduction. Listening to this debate has afforded me the opportunity to reflect. I fail to understand the self-assured platform upon which those opposite languish. Those opposite have only held government once in 23 years and only briefly for 34 months during which time the LNP's only fiscal policy was executed using the most simplistic—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Mansfield, I might draw you back to the long title of the bill, please.

**Ms McMILLAN**:—ill-informed, amateur and unintelligent means. That is hardly adequate experience to speak with such conviction. Cut, sack and sell strategies that are not drawn from sound economic theories nor of sound monetary policy—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Member for Mansfield, I draw you back to the long title of the bill, please.

**Ms McMILLAN**:—such as the sacking of 14,000 public servants. Fourteen hundred public servants from the community of Mansfield like Debbie lost their job during the years from 2012 to 2014, which proved only to reduce spending in our local communities.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Member for Mansfield, for the third time can I draw you back to the long title of the bill, please.

**Ms McMILLAN**: I appreciate your advice, Deputy Speaker. My electorate of Mansfield will never forget what the LNP did to our community. This is significant legislation that will support the state's contribution to the Queensland Future (Debt Retirement) Fund first established under the Queensland

Future Fund Act 2020. The bill allows for the pooling of income from state government investments and it is expected that increased levels of equity will support the retention of our AAA rating from major credit agencies.

The Queensland government takes very seriously our responsibility to the people of Queensland to pay down debt over time, but we do not apologise to those members opposite for expending borrowed funds, increasing government debt to keep Queenslanders safe and to grow our economy in the midst of the most dangerous pandemic in a century still raging in many countries across the world. Right from the first briefing from Queensland Health that spelled out the dangers of COVID-19, the Premier was committed to doing whatever it took to save the lives and livelihoods of Queenslanders. While the then Leader of the Opposition flip-flopped around on whether saving the economy was more important than protecting the health of Queenslanders, our Premier secured the funds to do what needed to be done—that was to save lives. COVID-19 has finally slayed the neoliberal bogeyman of debt and deficit.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Mansfield, for the fourth time please come back to the bill. At least mention the bill every now and then.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker. For decades we have been subject to the myth of superior coalition economic management whose conservative ideology ridiculed the federal Labor debt of the global financial crisis which saved a nation from recession and maintained full employment. When Labor's debt reached \$48 billion the federal LNP said it was unbearable. At \$90 billion it was crippling. At \$153 billion it was exorbitant and at \$160 billion Labor was addicted to debt. In the following years of coalition governments debt rose in successive budgets to \$210 billion, to \$246 billion, to \$303 billion, to \$322 billion, to \$342 billion and, as COVID-19 arrived, to \$488 billion, to \$677 billion, at which point the Prime Minister said the debt was manageable, and in the recent budget statement the LNP coalition landed a deficit of \$161 billion and a debt just shy of \$1 trillion.

When it came to protecting Australian citizens from COVID-19, the federal government suddenly dispensed with its obsession with surpluses and its belief that markets deliver benefits to the economy, not government intervention or planning. Now debt was good and government intervention was necessary. Yet, before the virus, when it was proposed that the Indigenous first owners of this land be recompensed for loss, they said it was too expensive. When it was proposed that dangerous climate change be properly managed, they said it would trash our economy. When it was proposed that we create an energy plan that transitioned from fossil fuel to renewables, we were told it would smash jobs and the economy.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart):** Member for Mansfield, mentioning the bill every now and then would be helpful. I know we have had a wideranging discussion, but just come back to the long title of the bill.

**Mr BROWN:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member has been talking about debt for the past two minutes. I have been listening in regards to that. That goes exactly to the title of the bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have made a ruling, member for Capalaba. Please resume your seat. Member for Mansfield, just mention the bill every now and again.

**Ms McMILLAN:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that. We will manage debt responsibly over the ensuing years through the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. When it was proposed that equality of opportunity for women be better managed through free childhood, we were told that the federal LNP government could not afford it. When concerns were raised about the level of casual employment in the workforce, we were told that the economy could not provide a full-time job for everyone. When it was proposed that infrastructure be built to service regional Australia through very fast rail and NBN technology, we were told that there was no money for that. When it was proposed that government drought proof this land through major infrastructure work, we were told that the costs would be prohibitive. When asked for free university education, the LNP stated that that was not possible.

The double standards of the LNP's economic management philosophy are laid bare for all to see. We will not be lectured to about debt and deficit by this opposition which no longer knows what it believes about managing an economy. We are guided by the principle that an economy works for the people, not the other way around. We will manage debt responsibly over the ensuing years through the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021.

I reflect on my time as a school principal during the LNP years in government in Queensland. At that time I spent many sleepless nights as I worried about my vulnerable students and their families because of the closure of the Barrett adolescent mental health centre; threats to close my school, which

is now a thriving school of more than 900 students; cuts to the Inala Youth Service; cuts to local emergency accommodation providers; cuts to programs that support students who have been suspended or who are disengaged from school; cuts to traineeships and apprenticeships; cuts to the FTE numbers of teachers; the sacking of child safety workers; and cuts to domestic violence services.

Whilst I was desperately trying to find the funds from my school budget to ensure my students and their families survived, they engaged in punitive and disgraceful measures such as instructing teachers not to make colour photocopies for class work and not to order class sets of newspapers as part of student learning experiences.

I will finish with some wise words from one of the world's most successful investors, Warren Buffet. He said—

If you're in the luckiest one per cent of humanity, you owe it to the rest of humanity to think about the other 99 per cent.

He also said—

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.

Plant a tree or trees we will do. The Palaszczuk government will continue to invest today to ensure a strong economy for tomorrow as that is what a Labor government does. I commend this bill to the House.