




Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**

**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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### **DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (4.44 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. The bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly and referred to the committee for examination on 25 March 2021. During the examination of the bill the committee carried out extensive work to ensure that Queenslanders were being heard through the submission and public hearing process. I acknowledge the Treasurer for all of his work in keeping the economic interests of Queenslanders front and centre as we move through these challenging times. This strong economic plan affirms the Queensland government's commitment to implementing a savings and debt plan that is intended to deliver \$3 billion in budgetary savings over the four-year period from 2020-21 to 2023-24 to support Queensland's economic recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

I am proud to speak in support of the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill because, to put it simply, it is a good honest bill. The first chapter of the bill goes into detail about this government's intention to reduce our debts and produce an economic surplus. The Queensland Future Fund Act creates the first Future Fund, the Debt Retirement Fund, to hold state investments for future growth. A key aim of the Debt Retirement Fund is to support the state's credit rating by achieving recognition of the value of the fund by rating agencies against the state's debt. Currently, the Titles Registry is not recognised as an asset on the state's balance sheet. This bill is important because it protects Queensland's public assets against privatisation by a future LNP government as we on this side of the House know all too well that an LNP government's response to debt reduction would be to cut, sack and sell. They have done it before and they will do it again.

I take those opposite back to a little over 12 months ago to remind them that it was this government that took the necessary steps to declare a public health emergency due to COVID-19 in this state. This government had no time to waste. This government, the Palaszczuk government, hit the ground running to enforce measures to safeguard Queenslanders. This government stepped up to invest in our health system to increase our service capacity around the state. This government released a stimulus package to provide support for households and businesses to assist with the earliest impacts of COVID-19.

Cook is one of the most vulnerable communities in Queensland with the largest number of discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as many elderly people; those factors clearly place my electorate in the most vulnerable category in this state. Given the vastness of the region, the government worked collaboratively with government and non-government agencies to achieve the best outcomes for people living in the electorate of Cook. We worked with the federal government to initiate restrictions to slow the traffic of people into and out of Cape York and the Torres Strait. I commend the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health for monitoring the passage of people entering Cape York through Cairns Airport and the Mulligan Highway on the Tablelands. We provided quarantine options for people returning to Cape York and the Torres Strait, as tough as that decision was, and we covered all bases to keep COVID from entering any one of the communities in my electorate.

When our schools shut their doors, this government worked with local communities on Cape York and in the Torres Strait to coordinate a strong response to get our kids back into their communities safely and to help them to continue their educational outcomes during that period. We worked closely with the HHS in my region to ensure that there were strong local and regional health plans to coordinate any future threat of COVID. We stood up fever clinics in Mareeba, Mossman, Weipa and Thursday Island, amongst other places in my electorate. I had the pleasure of visiting fever clinics in Mossman and on Thursday Island. I can tell the House that it was enlightening to see the local health professionals getting behind this government's response to safeguard local people and local communities and to fight—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Hart): Member for Cook, I draw you back to the long title of the bill. You started really well, but are you drifting away a bit.

**Ms LUI:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel it is important to put into perspective the challenges for communities in my electorate and the measures that this government took to safeguard those communities. Highlighting the vast region of my electorate and the communities that are scattered throughout Far North Queensland is important in this debate because all of the government investment into regional and remote Queensland was done to safeguard those communities and to keep COVID out. Any investment was critical.

We knew that COVID was having a huge impact on our economic position in this state and I saw this throughout my communities. Our small business COVID grant is just another example of this government stepping up to the plate and assisting industries in far-flung regions. It was to support people getting through the impacts of COVID-19. Deputy Speaker, I can see you smiling.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Come back to the long title of the bill, please, member for Cook.

**Ms LUI:** The conversation about reducing state debt goes back to the investments we made in communities. We invested in hospitals, roads and services throughout Queensland. The reason underlying all of that was to keep Queensland safe. All these investments were critical to not only safeguarding our communities but also supporting and putting people back into jobs.

I want to speak about the track record of those opposite. We know that during the Campbell Newman era of government there was a lot of cutting. We saw that 14,000 government workers were sacked, some from hospitals right across Queensland. We saw nurses lose their jobs as a result of decisions the LNP government made. In a global pandemic it scares me to think of the LNP in government, knowing what their decisions will mean for Queensland. We face future cutting, sacking and selling of all of our resources across Queensland.

**Ms Richards:** Frontline services.

**Ms LUI:** I take the interjection. It is about protecting frontline services.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Cook, please return to the long title of the bill—maybe the lands office. Do you want to talk about that?

**Ms LUI:** I will not go any further. I believe this is a very important bill for Queensland. This government is doing all it can to reduce the debt in this state. More importantly, we are here working for Queensland—unlike those opposite, who like to sack, cut and sell every opportunity they get.