




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (4.38 pm): I rise to support the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill. The Palaszczuk government has a savings and debt plan to support economic recovery. This is good economic management and the target is \$3 billion in savings over four years.

We can talk about the number of things that this bill will allow us to do—even the issues raised by the member for Traeger. I acknowledge his contribution because we can speak about addressing the different issues that members in this House are raising because of this bill.

Whether those opposite like it or not, in this bill we have a plan and it will allow the government to pursue the following priorities. Our No. 1 priority that we went to the election with is creating and supporting jobs. I listened to the member for Traeger, and he is right; it is very difficult to unscramble the egg. Once you lose some of these jobs from regional areas, they are very hard to put back again. It is very difficult. Once the move is made it is very hard to unscramble. We are about creating jobs and asking: what are the jobs for the future; how do we support those jobs; what are those industries going to be going forward? This Debt Reduction and Savings Bill is about looking further at those organisations that we are now amending in this bill and thinking about what are the jobs of the future and how do we support them?

Just because we support one thing does not mean we may not support another. It is about saying how best we can cut the cloth, and this bill will enable good economic management. In this bill we will also focus on the priority of building essential infrastructure. It could be the CopperString line, it could be a wind farm, it could be supporting a number of things right throughout Queensland. This is no more evident than in my portfolio of education. I do not think there is one electorate in this House that has not seen significant funds spent on education infrastructure in one way or another, and I will talk more on that later in my speech.

We want to deliver those frontline services that were decimated by those opposite, and it does take a while to do that. We may never get back to where we were in some of these areas, but that is what the plan is prioritising. It is prioritising jobs, jobs and jobs through building essential infrastructure and delivering on the frontline services decimated by those opposite. We have heard speaker after speaker talking about the decimation, particularly about the promise that was made that people had nothing to fear. Then after they came in, that changed. We hear time and time again about the level of cuts, sacking and selling that went on.

Our savings and debt plan focuses on harnessing innovation and ensuring productivity improvements to drive the Queensland economy into the future. It was no good building stagecoaches when cars were coming on to the market. I am sure the last stagecoach built was the best one ever seen, but the future was cars and the stagecoaches have now gone. We have to have a plan about what the future industries are going to be. It is all right to bury your head in the sand and say this is not

happening, but that is why we have a plan for hydrogen, energy and renewables. That is what this is all about. The world is changing. We are in a world health pandemic and we need to look forward, and this bill enables us to do so.

This is the Labor way: creating the savings, maintaining effective frontline services and driving jobs, not the alternative, which is the LNP's cut, sack and sell plan. The bill protects against the LNP cuts by setting out sensible savings instead of damaging cuts like the LNP wants to inflict on Queensland. This bill protects the Titles Registry against privatisation by a future LNP government, just as Labor protected our publicly owned assets from privatisation. When it comes to debt and deficit—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: We hear those opposite yelling and moaning. However, the people of Queensland have spoken and they have rejected their plan of cutting, sacking and selling since 2015. Those opposite whittled away one of the biggest majorities that any government had ever held in this state. In one term they were out of government—

Mr Tantari: Why is that?

Ms GRACE: 'Why is that?' the member for Hervey Bay asks. I take the interjection. It is because they had no idea about what they were doing. All they were interested in was cutting, sacking and selling. Time and time again the Queensland electorates have rejected those opposite.

Those opposite are growing older in opposition. Some of them were in the cabinet with 'Nuclear Newman', as we have come to know him. That is the future, isn't it—nuclear energy! They put him into the leadership role in the LNP; they are always looking back to the future. Here we are in Labor with a bill that is looking to the future. We are talking about the new industries. We are talking about the new innovation. We are talking about the new jobs and the training and the schools that go with them, yet time and time again all that those opposite can do is go back to 'Nuclear Newman'. They will bring him back into the LNP hierarchy and here we go again. They will not learn, but Labor has a plan. We were elected to deliver on our election commitments and this plan is all about doing that.

An opposition member: You sold all the assets.

Ms GRACE: Those opposite can interject as much as they like because they just do not like hearing it. They do not like the truth. They cannot handle the truth. I love that movie where Jack Nicholson said, 'You can't handle the truth!' Let me tell honourable members, that is exactly those opposite.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: They are yelling out across the chamber little bits and pieces worried that they are under scrutiny.

Mr MICKELBERG: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118. The minister is quoting nebulous references to *A Few Good Men* and is not talking to the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Walker): Take your seat, Minister, for one moment, please. I will not take the point of order.

Ms GRACE: It is good that the member for Buderim knows the movie, *A Few Good Men*. I thank him for enlightening me that that was where the line came from; I had almost forgotten. I knew who delivered it, but I did not know the movie. Those opposite would know all about that line because it is very applicable to them.

When it comes to infrastructure, we are spending a record amount this financial year alone. There is \$1.9 billion allocated to education as opposed to when we came in, when there was only \$550 million from those opposite. What an outstanding achievement by this government.

There is no better contrast between what this savings and debt plan will allow us to do with good economic management and what those opposite did to schools. They had a hit list of 50 schools that they were going to close and there is no starker example than that of the Fortitude Valley State Secondary College. They closed that school and put up a big 'for sale' sign at the front, but look what Labor built. Honourable members should come to my electorate and look at that school. It is outstanding as, too, is the Foxwell State Secondary College in Coomera. They are two outstanding schools; that is the contrast between what we do in education and what those opposite do.

Those opposite also sold off the distance education building at West End in a fire sale for \$12.6 million. They sold that building. Unbelievable! Then there were all those schools that were earmarked for closure. The other day the member for Pine Rivers and I went to Bray Park State High

School for the launch of the P&C Awards and it was fantastic. I drove past Everton Park State High School and what a school that is now. Under the opposition it was earmarked to be sold and closed. I say to the member for Everton that we saved the school for him. When driving past my jaw dropped to see the outstanding buildings that have now been located at that school which has growing numbers—delivered by Labor. All the member for Everton needs to do is say thank you.

Then we drove past Albany Creek State High School and saw another magnificent building on the corner there. There was also the land for sale in Gladstone at Calliope but now we have a fantastic high school located there. I could go on forever about what we have achieved as a Labor government. This savings and debt plan is about good economic management. I commend the bill to the House.