




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (3.41 pm): The member for Everton has taught us quite a lot about wasting time. I rise to speak in support of the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. The LNP has always had a slash-and-burn mentality when it comes to economic management. Their agenda of cuts, sackings and selling the state's assets has hurt Queenslanders in the past. I support the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill because it is all about protecting Queenslanders from the LNP's hard-line agenda.

Two weekends ago I had a stall at the Ipswich Show and last Sunday I had another stall at the Gathering Festival, which was held at the Ipswich Turf Club. The Ipswich Show saw about 30,000 people walk through the gates over three days and the Gathering Festival saw around 8,000 people walk through the gates in one day. As members can imagine, that gave me ample opportunity to speak to many people from my electorate and surrounding areas, including Brisbane and Toowoomba. Even at those recent events people came up to me to recount their experiences of losing their jobs under the Campbell Newman LNP government. The 14,000 cuts to the Public Service had a devastating and long-ranging impact on people's lives. People have not forgotten.

When I was elected, Ipswich was hurting because of the LNP's mass sackings. People told me they wanted to see good frontline services restored and when the Palaszczuk government was elected in 2015 we committed to restoring those frontline services. However, the LNP does not seem to have learned their lesson from their brief time in government. They have not reflected on the incredible impact their cuts had on people's lives and the experiences of those people, whose lives were turned upside down by the LNP's sharply ideological agenda of cuts, sackings and the selling of public assets. It is pretty clear that there is no change to those views. I think they are quite content to be on that side of the House.

Only Labor can be trusted to make sensible and prudent savings in a way that does not hurt Queenslanders. The savings that are being made through this bill will support frontline services and ensure that they are sustainable and focused on the public's needs. Of course, the LNP say these savings do not go far enough but what they really mean and what they really want to see is hard cuts. Investing in our frontline services is not in the LNP's DNA, just like when they were in government and sacked 14,000 public servants, including 4,000 health workers and that included 1,800 midwives, and cut infrastructure spending to record lows. We know that they would be ready to do it all over again. At the Ipswich Show and at the Gathering Festival what I heard loud and clear was that people have not forgotten.

**Mr Harper:** They've never apologised.

**Ms HOWARD:** They have never apologised. They just want to stay in opposition. People have not forgotten the LNP's slash-and-burn agenda under Campbell Newman. Ipswich has not forgotten Campbell Newman's cuts to 124 hospital and health jobs at West Moreton Hospital and Health Service, including 92 nurses and midwives. Ipswich cannot forget that under the LNP we saw a massive spike

in unemployment as a direct result of the slashing and axing of government services and programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work, despite an independent economic assessment of the program. It was not just a mean-spirited thing to cut it; it was economically stupid.

Ipswich has not forgotten that Campbell Newman cut vital community services such as the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service, including IRASI, the Ipswich Regional Advocacy Service. Ipswich has not forgotten when the LNP closed down the Barrett Adolescent Centre in Wacol to make way for health budget cuts. Those cuts have left a devastating human toll and sometimes have had tragic consequences.

The LNP's agenda of privatising Queensland's public assets is another reason why Queenslanders cannot afford to trust the LNP. For instance, the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill provides a mechanism for the Queensland Titles Registry to contribute to the first Queensland Future Fund, the Debt Retirement Fund, which will improve our debt-to-revenue ratio by approximately nine per cent when assessed by ratings agencies.

The contribution of the Titles Registry to the Debt Retirement Fund provides for the transfer of functions, assets, liabilities and employees from the Titles Registry to a new entity, Registry Co. This is a sensible action that will demonstrate that we have a measured and responsible plan to invest today to pay down state debt into the future. Queensland taxpayers will be getting the full value of the Titles Registry on our balance sheet, but the LNP complains about the Titles Registry being put into the Future Fund. Why? Because that means they cannot sell it off! Having the Titles Registry on our balance sheet means that the LNP can no longer make up disingenuous arguments about the need to privatise the registry and can no longer waste taxpayers' money on consultant fees to churn out phoney reports recommending that it be sold off.

The people in my electorate of Ipswich are vehemently opposed to privatising the state's strategic assets and will not fall for the LNP's sneaky privatisation agenda again. They will not forget that it was the LNP that sold Queensland Motorways, that tried selling our electricity assets and ports, and that wasted \$70 million in consultant fees in the process.

Another thing that the LNP do not like about this bill is the repeal of the Public Safety Business Agency Act. The LNP is angry that the PSBA is being abolished because they want to sell it off if they ever get back into government. The PSBA was set up by the Campbell Newman government, ostensibly to cut waste and reduce the duplication of services, but their main intention was to sell it. Privatisation is in their DNA. Since being established, the PSBA has undergone several reviews and has actually added more complexity to governance and service delivery management, and that has led to more inefficiencies, increased risk and added costs. Creating a new agency that only leads to waste, inefficiencies and increased costs to taxpayers is not what sensible economic management looks like.

This bill will also see Building Queensland and the Productivity Commission abolished as statutory entities and integrated into government agencies. They have both served Queensland well, but now it is time for them to continue their work in government agencies to help support our recovery and save money.

Another way we are making sensible savings through this bill is by making changes to the way that the government advertises public notices. More and more people are now getting their news online and there is a real risk of people not finding government notices if they are advertised only in print newspapers. We need to publish notices where people are and most people are now online. I add that the current amendments in this bill recognise that there are still many newspapers in print circulation, especially in regional Queensland. As such, an exemption is provided for print publications in regional areas where local newspapers continue to play a key role in the life of the local communities.

The LNP talk about debt and deficit as if it is some sort of disaster of biblical proportions, but I really have to hand it to them for their great capacity for cognitive dissonance on this issue. The LNP are an outrage machine when it comes to deficit, but when it comes to the Morrison government's trail of deficit, which the country will be living with for the next 10 years with no surplus in sight, the LNP are very quiet. The LNP are the experts when it comes to complaining about debt, but on Morrison's trillion dollars worth of debt there is not a peep to be heard. The LNP only use debt and deficit as a justification for cutting, selling and sacking. Their fearmongering gives them a useful excuse to scare the public into thinking that we need to cut government services and sack frontline workers.

The \$3 million in sensible savings that we are making through the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill will make a world of difference to my community when it is invested. Those savings may not sound like much to the LNP, but they can go far in places such as Ipswich. I will outline some of the things our government can do with \$3 million of savings. In the lead-up to the state election last year, the Palaszczuk government committed a million dollars towards the Ipswich-Springfield rail line strategic

business case and another \$400,000 towards a transport and mobility study for Ipswich. Already that is \$1.4 million invested in supporting the future transport needs of Ipswich. Also in the lead-up to the election last year, the Palaszczuk government delivered \$900,000 to Raceview soccer club to build a new clubhouse, change rooms and a canteen, and a further \$500,000 for the Ipswich BMX Club to build a new clubhouse and canteen. There we have another \$1.4 million invested in our community which will make the world of difference to our local sporting clubs and create jobs in the process.

The savings made in this bill are sensible and necessary. Furthermore, they show that only Labor can be trusted to manage the economy and save money without hurting Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.