




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.20 pm): I rise in support of the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. This bill contains sensible debt reduction and savings measures and is just one initiative under Queensland's savings and debt plan, which targets \$3 billion in savings over four years. Under this bill up to \$3 million in direct savings will be made each year and there will be substantially more indirect savings. This will put Queensland in the right place to face down significant financial turbulence as we exit the worst pandemic event in more than a century.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Ms LINARD: I do not know if I said something wrong, member for Chatsworth.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Pause the clock. Member for Nudgee, direct your comments through the chair.

Ms LINARD: The measures in this bill, coupled with the more than \$350 million in savings this government has already achieved through targeted measures, will allow us to spend more and spend responsibly on the things that matter, such as our child protection and youth justice systems. Thanks to this government's sensible economic management, I was able to announce in March that my department would employ an additional 150 new frontline child safety workers to help keep Queensland children safe. This is on top of our record investment of \$1.4 billion in our child safety system in the 2020-21 financial year alone.

The government has been effective and responsible economic managers, and we are making savings in ways that maintain the support that is so necessary to vulnerable people in our community. During the time of the Newman government my community suffered due to their agenda of cutting, sacking and selling, including making cuts to vital local services such as the Pyjama Foundation, which was then based in my electorate. They tried to sell local school playing fields like those at Earnshaw State College. Hardworking public servants were sacked. The Metro North HHS lost 1,431 hospital and health jobs, including 731 nurse and midwife positions. The total numbers across Queensland were even more bleak: 14,000 public servants including 4,000 health worker, affecting 1,800 nurses and midwives.

Our communities fought back against these indiscriminate cuts through rallies and petitions, but residents spoke loudest at the 2015 ballot box when they sent the clear message that reckless cuts of this scale and magnitude were not acceptable. They voted for a Palaszczuk Labor government that would govern responsibly via measured initiatives such as the ones this bill aims to implement. The people of Queensland do not want to see a return to those dark days when the Newman government cut funding to NGOs that work with some of the most vulnerable families and children in the state. NGOs working in portfolio areas are treated as valued partners by the Palaszczuk government. NGOs such as Act for Kids, the organisation that provides free therapy and support services—

Mr STEVENS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance under standing order 118. The speaker is straying way off the long title of the bill. I would like her to be brought back to the long title of the bill.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will hear the point of order in silence! I will allow the member some latitude, but I will ask the member to come back to the long title of the bill.

Ms LINARD: The Newman government thanked them for their valuable work with a \$470,000 funding cut. The Newman government cut \$330,000 from the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program. They cut \$291,000 from the Triple P Parenting Program, which equips parents with the skills to raise healthy and well-adjusted children. They cut \$240,000 from Foster Care Queensland, now Queensland Foster and Kinship Care.

We on this side value their contribution, so when it comes to recruiting and supporting foster and kinship carers I was pleased that their executive director, Bryan Smith, could join me on the Speaker's Green on Saturday to launch our latest foster and kinship carer recruitment program. Then there is the \$46,000 they cut from Bravehearts. This is the same LNP that dares to come in here and try to lecture us about child protection matters. Finally, to come back to a local service, there is the \$100,000 they cut from the Pyjama Foundation. Those opposite cut \$100,000 from the wonderful people who volunteer their time each week—

Mr STEVENS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The matters being raised by the speaker have no relevance to this bill whatsoever. I ask that you bring the speaker back to the long title of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I will allow you the opportunity to explain how what you are saying relates to the long title of the bill and then I will make a ruling.

Ms LINARD: This bill allows us to continue funding these programs.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has the call.

Ms LINARD: As I was saying, finally there is the \$100,000 they cut from the Pyjama Foundation. But we were able to fund the Pyjama Foundation to continue the wonderful work that their volunteers do each time a child comes into care to read, play, do educational games and help them with their homework.

Contrast the LNP with the Palaszczuk government. As the Treasurer said in his introductory speech, we seek savings and debt reduction so we can invest in the services that matter to Queensland. We do not cut nurse and midwife numbers, we do not cut teacher numbers and we do not cut police officer numbers. That is the difference between us and those opposite. We make sensible savings that do not cut frontline services and hurt Queenslanders. They cut, sack and sell. Since coming to government in 2015 we have restored the funding to organisations those opposite saw fit to cut.

In my department alone we have allocated more than \$850 million since 2015 and funded more than 550 new staff to the end of 2019-20 in child safety. In youth justice we have invested more than half a billion dollars on new detention centre beds and new programs to reduce youth offending. There are other reforms in this bill which will make a real and significant difference to the lives of Queenslanders. Productivity is the key driver of economic growth in Queensland and, more importantly, is critical to increasing wage growth in our state. Bringing skill, expertise and knowledge from the Queensland Productivity Commission into the Queensland Treasury will help the government make meaningful strides to improve the productivity of Queensland workers and the efficiency of government services.

This bill will also introduce a system to index government fees to inflation—a promise to vulnerable Queenslanders which means that government fees will not put price pressures on the poorest of Queenslanders. These changes will mean that the price of a loaf of bread and a litre in milk in 2021 will be indexed so they are worth the same amount in 2041. This is about fairness and consistency and not taking advantage of vulnerable Queenslanders so the government can make a quick buck.

That was the strategy of the Newman government when those opposite set indexation at 3.5 per cent per annum. That may not sound like much, but it meant that the price of renewing your driver's licence increased by 11 per cent over three years. It meant that under the LNP's approach the cost of urgently registering a marriage or requesting a simple commemorative certificate—\$145 today—would increase over 10 years by more than 41 per cent even if prices only rose 10 per cent over the same period. That policy was designed to hit the poorest in our community the hardest. It was a structural

measure designed to inflict maximum pressure on those Queenslanders struggling to make ends meet. Every day families were set up to suffer. This bill is about savings our way. These are fair and sensible measures that will help Queensland recover from COVID without hurting the most vulnerable in our community. That is the difference between a Palaszczuk Labor government and those opposite. I commend the bill to the House.