




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (6.49 pm): What a passionate contribution from the member for Warrego—and for the sake of *Hansard*, that was sarcasm. I rise to contribute to the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill. I acknowledge the Economics and Governance Committee for all its hard work in providing its report on the bill and, of course, all those who contributed to that report.

This bill is about reducing the burden of debt for our state and delivering savings for Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government makes sensible savings decisions that do not hurt Queenslanders. The savings that this bill supports will ensure our frontline services are sustainable and responsive to the needs of the public. This is critically important. Being responsible economic managers means that when the world hits tough times, as it did last year with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our government is in a position to support Queenslanders and that is exactly what we did.

Last year as part of the Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs initiative, we announced a \$100 million Works for Tradies package to build 215 new homes and support 240 jobs in construction. We announced nearly \$60 million worth of initiatives, including a \$22.5 million Arts and Cultural Recovery Package to help sustain the arts and cultural sector, a sector that each year injects \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supports more than 92,000 Queensland jobs. In fact, Queensland was one of the first jurisdictions to act when it came to supporting the arts and cultural sector, knowing how hard the sector was hit by COVID. Also as part of our COVID-19 economic stimulus we invested \$8.9 million in a National Parks Works and Jobs Boost to support jobs and infrastructure in these tourism drawcards. Being good economic managers means governments can support jobs and businesses when times get tough.

The LNP oppose this bill because the only savings measures they know how to employ are cuts—cuts to frontline services, cuts to Public Service jobs—and the sale of public assets. During their time in government under Campbell Newman, with the member for Broadwater sitting around the cabinet table, the LNP showed Queensland their ideas about how to save money and it gutted our state. It is no surprise to see them here today opposing the bill with its measured and responsible plan to invest today and pay down state debt into the future.

I think it is important to remind the House how the LNP tried to save money in the housing portfolio when it was in government. They cut investment in social housing construction and they tried to off-load housing assets. The member for Everton, as the former housing minister, oversaw a huge reduction in social housing construction.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order!

Ms ENOCH: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. In fact, construction ground to a halt in places like Logan, Redland City, Rockhampton, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Ipswich where, in 2013-14, at the height of the member for Everton's leadership in housing, not a single

new social housing project commenced construction. Not one social housing project commenced construction in that year alone in all of those locations. That is how the LNP save money: they cut essential government investment.

They also cut funding to the Tenancy Advisory and Advocacy Service, the service that provided valuable advice and support for vulnerable tenants. In the worst move, they introduced a three-strikes policy that treated social housing tenants like second-class citizens and created new rules for them that no-one else had to abide by. Their policy did not result in a drop in antisocial behaviour or an increase in evictions; it just told social housing tenants that the LNP thought they were a burden. On top of that, they set out to off-load 90 per cent of Queensland's social housing off the government books and, of course, the public servants who went along with the support of that work, walking away from government's responsibilities to vulnerable people. They continue to spruik that same policy, making it clear to Queenslanders that that is exactly what their plans are for the future: to off-load social housing and to walk away from the responsibility of governments to protect and serve vulnerable Queenslanders.

There are still many Queenslanders today who remember all too well the cut, sack and sell approach of the LNP. There are plenty of people who rely on social housing who still remember how they were treated by the LNP and how they are still being treated. These are the kinds of savings measures we saw from the LNP when they had their time in government. When you put that alongside the policies being put in place by the Palaszczuk government it is like chalk and cheese.

Our \$1.6 billion Housing Construction Jobs Program represents the biggest investment in social housing since World War II and will deliver 5,500 social housing and affordable homes by 2027. We know how to put in place responsible savings measures while still being able to invest in what vulnerable Queenslanders need, such as a safe place to live and a roof over their head. The LNP's cut, sack and sell agenda saw them cut 14,000 public servants, including 4,000 health workers and affecting 1,800 midwives. They cut the infrastructure spend to record lows. Cut, sack and sell is all they know how to do. It is not responsible government. It is not how Labor governments on this side of the House operate.

The bill also includes other measures that are relevant to the communities, housing and digital economy portfolio. This bill makes a minor amendment to the Retirement Villages Act 1999 in relation to registration fees. When a retirement village scheme is registered, the Retirement Villages Act 1999 provides that a statutory charge is created over the retirement village. A statutory charge is a way to register an interest over property. Schedule 3 of the bill makes an amendment to section 126 in part 6 of the Retirement Villages Act 1999.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order, members to my left!

Ms ENOCH: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. This section exempts the chief executive of the department administering the Retirement Villages Act 1999 from paying registration or other fees under the Land Title Act 1994 to record a statutory charge, or release a statutory charge, on the title in relation to a retirement village. There is a proposed minor amendment which clarifies that the chief executive of the department administering the Retirement Villages Act 1999 will continue to be exempt from the payment of title registry fees when statutory charges are recorded or released under the Retirement Villages Act 1999.

Unlike the LNP, the Palaszczuk government makes sensible savings that do not cut frontline services and do not hurt Queenslanders. The LNP's agenda to cut, sack and sell was devastating for our state. This bill is a strong defence against that kind of reckless behaviour. When the LNP were in office in this state we saw what they did to housing and we saw what they did to public servants. Every single person on this side of the House knows people in their own electorate who have been impacted by those cuts. Even today there are many people who are more than willing to tell their story about how they were impacted by the cuts of the LNP government.

Tonight those opposite have shown over and over again in their contributions to this bill that they have not changed and that they have no intention of changing. They have not learnt the lesson of the past. They continue to see that the only way to manage the economy is to cut, sack and sell. The Labor government and this bill represents a sensible way forward to manage what we have seen as an impact of COVID. Our approach is to be sensible economic managers to make sure that Queenslanders are protected. Responsible debt reduction and savings measures are good for Queensland and I support the bill.