




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (2.03 pm): I listened with interest to the speech of the member for Kawana, both before and after the lunch break, and I had a mental picture of game shows back in the eighties that had big spinning wheels with gold and silver sequins. There was always a character—a bit like the member for Kawana—who would be dressed up and would spin the wheel. In this case, instead of having prizes such as we had in the eighties like a washing machine or a 24-inch television—

Mr Healy: Or a Toyota Celica.

Mr POWER: Or sometimes a Toyota Celica. However, each time this game show wheel was spun, between the gold and silver sequins all the answers were, 'Look at me!', 'Look at me!', 'Look at me!' Frankly, that is all the member for Kawana has with his stunts on this budget. It is disappointing that despite a once-in-a-generation social, health and economic event he cannot take these concerns seriously. Instead, he has to play silly politics and, of course, silly games such as that.

We are incredibly encouraged that we have a 5.4 per cent unemployment rate. We are incredibly encouraged that since May last year the state has created 86,000 jobs. I ask those around the parliament: what was the most important date in relation to this budget? I ask that through the chair, Madam Deputy Speaker; I am asking rhetorically. Some people would say that it was when the Treasurer made his speech. Others would say that it was in the months of preparation and hard work beforehand. Some in the opposition might say that it was this morning when the opposition leader gave his speech. I argue that the most important date in relation to this budget was actually—and I ask members to cast their minds back—31 January 2020.

I know that date well because that was the date that we were to hold the Labor caucus to consider what we were going to be doing into the future. Instead, on that day, as we were driving to our annual retreat, we heard that the whole ministerial team was not going to come. Instead, they were going to have a series of special meetings to activate emergency health, police and other services. That was in January.

Mr Stevens: 2020.

Mr POWER: You are right: January 2020. Unlike the federal government, we did not wait to see what would happen. We did not go to the football that weekend, unlike a federal government minister. We did not wait a week until ministerial diaries cleared. This government acted early, decisively and firmly because this is a government that protects Queenslanders and protects their economy. This government was probably alone in taking that whole-of-government action on 31 January—perhaps alone in the whole world. I recognise that this government has continued to make the best decisions to protect Queenslanders through the pandemic.

Of course, we have protected the lives of senior Queenslanders and the health of all Queenslanders and we know that those actions were vital to protect the industries, jobs and economy of Queensland. Through the pandemic some have mistakenly said that we had a simple choice: a healthy population or a growing healthy economy. That was a false choice. We needed both options. We could have had a situation where the pandemic was killing senior Queenslanders and weakening the Queensland economy but we chose to have a healthy population that would lead to confident Queenslanders working productively and a stronger economy. It was one or the other and we know we need a healthy population for a healthy economy.

At this stage in my speech nothing would give me greater pleasure than to inform the House that throughout the history of this event we have had bipartisan support from those across the aisle. Of course, I am not talking about the anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists of Pauline Hanson's One Nation but their fellow travellers in the LNP. In some ways they were more dangerous than Pauline Hanson because they would have damaged the economy by prematurely opening up the borders to infected southern states. That was the policy of the LNP. They called for it 64 times. All of their members supported it.

We know that instead of having shadow cabinet meetings to support the government's health response they were having meetings to undermine it. We also know that they secretly talked with both the Premier of New South Wales and the Prime Minister, attacking the health responses of Queensland.

Ms Bates: Do you know that?

Mr POWER: I do. I take the interjection.

Ms Bates: You were on the phone? You were in the meetings?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Through the chair. Comments will come through the chair.

Mr POWER: The member asked how I know. I do know about it and I will give the reasons for that. We found out about this because at that point it was beginning to become obvious that the policy of the LNP was a failure. In an interview with Gladys Berejiklian, Karl Stefanovic asked, 'The state election is this Saturday. Have you spoken with the opposition leader in Queensland'—at that time it was the member for Nanango—'about the possibility of her becoming premier and those borders coming down?' Referring to the member for Nanango, Gladys Berejiklian said, 'Oh look, Deb and I have a wonderful working relationship. We are in touch with each other all the time.' It was rather cute. It was very affectionate.

She goes on, '... so I know if she was elected Premier'—and this point is talking about the member for Nanango—'she would definitely open up the border and'—this is the important part—'she would have done it months ago because that's the way Deb and the LNP are up there.' 'That's the way Deb and the LNP are up there'—we know now because the Premier of New South Wales outed it.

We saw constantly the weakness of the former leader of the opposition going on Sky and saying one thing there and then saying another thing to the people of Queensland. It seems this has been continued by the next Leader of the Opposition, the member for Broadwater. Recently when he was asked, 'Are you ruling out cuts?' he said, 'I'm ruling out being savage.' Well, there is a long way to go before you go to the member's definition of 'savage cuts'.

I looked up a thesaurus and there are a lot of words around the definition of 'savage'. I found 'barbaric'. Barbaric cuts are not ruled out. The member for Broadwater could have, in his speech, ruled out barbaric cuts. 'Brutal' is also in the thesaurus—brutal cuts are not ruled out. Harsh cuts—those are loved by the member for Broadwater. Vicious cuts—well, that is what he is all about.

In trying to impress his mates on Sky, he has really let the cat out of the bag. He will not tell Queenslanders, but he will Sky News: there will be cuts; they will be barbaric, they will be brutal, crude, fierce, harsh and vicious. Queenslanders know now that cuts are what define the LNP because the member for Broadwater has told us so.

One of the things unfortunately they have spoken about is our securing the future of the Queensland titles office and taking it out of their privatising hands and putting it into the Debt Reduction Fund. They have now entered into a QAnon-style conspiracy about the valuation. Of course, this was completely transparent. We know that members of the committee will not engage in this QAnon-style conspiracy because they know; they were told at the committee hearing by the Under Treasurer that in relation to the valuations they would be developed by independent valuers on due diligence based on Treasury and QIC. The final values will be informed by the independent advisers of Queensland Treasury and the QIC. They will include the earnings, duration and calculations undertaken. There are a number of valuations that will go into the final valuation.

I had hoped the shadow Treasurer who should be following the committee should have absolutely known about that discussion. But they are going into their little conspiracy theories. Who would be involved in this conspiracy theory? The allegation from those on the committee, if they do deem to say this, but certainly the shadow Treasurer, the member for Toowoomba South, seems to say that there is a conspiracy between PwC, EY—Ernst & Young they used to be called—and BIS Oxford Economics, Deloitte and Allens-Linklaters. The Deputy Treasurer challenged it to go out and say that Tom Seymour, the CEO of PwC Queensland, was involved in this little conspiracy that they allege. Of course they will not say that because this is simple and silly politics.

We talked a lot about individual Queenslanders stories and names. We need to recognise, though, that one of the great and heartening things is, as the Premier says, there is nothing that gives Queenslanders greater dignity than having a job. We have reduced our unemployment down to 5.4 per cent. In the last month, the greatest fall in unemployment of any of the states has been in Queensland. It is the biggest monthly drop across the country. Behind that, though, is all of the names of the 86,400 individual people—all of those families, all of those households—all genuine Queenslanders who were nervous during the pandemic and they wanted the support of government to go on and do things.

The opposition know what I am going to say here. At this point there is normally a call-out about Scott Morrison around this. No-one is going to venture into that? Well they shouldn't because we know that Scott Morrison has failed his own home state of New South Wales because New South Wales has 33,000 less jobs than before the pandemic. So unless you are alleging that somehow not just PwC, Ernst & Young and Allens—the other conspirators—but the very Prime Minister is conspiring for Queensland against New South Wales.

We have serious challenges ahead of us—serious challenges to deal with the health of Queenslanders, serious challenges in growing unemployment as thousands of southerners flock to our state. We will continue to fight against these challenges. We have a strong record, we have a strong budget that backs Queenslanders, but we will not do it with all of the silly theories that do not address the reality of the situation we face.

There is a voice we will not hear at this budget time, and we will miss that voice. I endorse the bill to the House, thank you.