




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (4.59 pm): I rise to support the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill. I firstly commend the committee for its hard work on this bill, particularly the member for Logan in his chairing of the committee and delivering the report that has been handed down.

It is difficult to think of a starker contrast between the Palaszczuk government and its LNP predecessor than in the area of economic management. While this government chooses to invest and enable Queenslanders, the LNP chooses to slash, burn and sell the farm—

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr FURNER: Here we go, member for Gregory. Those opposite would have sold the farm no doubt and everyday Queenslanders would have suffered over and over again.

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr FURNER: I hear the harping from the member for Gregory. He is sitting on the Ernst & Young report about the sale of the QATC colleges. Those opposite were going to sell them lock, stock and barrel but never had the intestinal fortitude to come into this chamber during that short period when they were in government and table that report. It cost taxpayers thousands and thousands of dollars and those opposite never had the decency to come into this place and table what they were going to do with the QATC colleges—that is, sell them lock, stock and barrel. It is about time the member for Gregory tabled that Ernst & Young report, but no doubt he lacks the intestinal fortitude to do so.

Those opposite were proud of the damage they did to the people of Queensland and the fabric of the communities that once trusted them in government. They were proud when they sacked the nurses and the doctors from our health system. They were also proud that they cut through the agencies that helped domestic violence victims, the homeless and the most vulnerable people in the state of Queensland. The opposition leader was around the cabinet table at the time signing off on every heartless cut, every sacked frontline worker, every dagger to the heart of the fabric of Queensland. The facts speak for themselves: 14,000 public servants—4,000 health workers; 1800 nurses and midwives—were sacked. More than 600 positions in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries were cut under their watch. That is what their legacy stands for in this place. The Leader of the Opposition still stands by it—every word, every dollar. Like his predecessor as opposition leader and like her predecessor, he has never once apologised for the hurt and the harm the Newman government caused in its reign through that reckless period of the 2013-14 budget.

The bill currently before us represents a continuation of the Palaszczuk government's strong track record of economic responsibility to this state. We know that the LNP does not like to hear this, but the Palaszczuk government delivered five consecutive surplus budgets before the global coronavirus pandemic changed economies right across the world. We are still dealing with that fallout, but Queensland's economic recovery plan is setting our state up for the future to come out of this

pandemic even stronger. The plan has us investing in the critical industries and opportunities that will help more Queenslanders into jobs and will allow export and manufacturing industries to strive to new heights.

Deficits and increased debt are a reality for every government—and one only needs to look at the massive deficits being run by the Commonwealth government at present—yet the LNP complains about the deficit even when its federal counterpart, the Morrison government, has deficits for the next 10 years. There is no sign of a surplus for the next 10 years but rather a trillion dollars worth of deficit. The New South Wales Liberal government also has higher debt than Queensland and those opposite are out of step with their colleagues around the country and out of step with governments around the world. We know we need to run a tight ship, and that is exactly what the Palaszczuk government is doing, and we will continue to do it.

The work of the Queensland Productivity Commission and Building Queensland will continue within the processes of government while no longer being standalone agencies. We know—and Queenslanders know this—that we cannot pretend it is business as usual in the wake of this pandemic. Unlike the LNP when it was in government, we are putting downward pressure on the costs that impact on Queensland households. The LNP's approach of blanket annual fee increases of 3.5 per cent was a hammer blow to Queensland families. Under Labor, we have seen fee indexation fall first to 2.25 per cent and then 1.9 per cent and now 1.8 per cent.

I note from the opposition's statement of reservation in the committee report that it has taken exception to the measures recommended by the committee and undertaken through the actions in this bill. It is just like the LNP to throw every obstacle it can in the path of the Palaszczuk government's efforts to maintain budget discipline. What hypocrisy from those opposite. When in government they ran budget deficits, but in opposition they object to measures aimed at fiscal responsibility. Their objections to the functions of the Queensland Productivity Commission continuing within government show that they have not read the bill and nor do they understand it. The new Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction will still be able to make public inquires, including stakeholder or public consultation. It will continue to be the government's primary regulatory review provider and it will do that in a way that is transparent to the wider public.

The LNP's objection to modernising the provisions around public notice advertising are just comical. Newspaper businesses are evolving all around the world, but the LNP wants to reimpose the advertising practices of the 1970s and the 1980s as if a glorious past of abundant and wealthy newspaper businesses could be resurrected just by wishing it so. Unlike the LNP, the Palaszczuk government moves with the times. More and more people are getting their information online, whether it is here in the city or in the bush. That is where we need to put public notices. It is not good enough for a government to put a notice in a newspaper and hope it is read. I am, however, pleased that there is an exception in the bill so that notices can still be made in newspapers in regional communities where appropriate. All of us in this place remember the horror of the LNP budgets of the Campbell Newman era. Members of the opposition do not like to talk about it much, but in their heart of hearts they yearn for a return to their cut, sack and sell agenda. When they were in government they sold Queensland Motorways. They tried to sell electricity assets and ports and they wasted \$70 million in taxpayers' money on consultants to try to do this.

Their cynical approach even extended to education. One of the first bills we dealt with when I was chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee was that dealing with the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority in competition with TAFE. The LNP wanted to privatise TAFE immediately but instead did it in 2014. It was set up to run down TAFE campuses and open them up for other training providers—privatisation by stealth. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's examination of the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Repeal Bill in 2015 clearly demonstrates the LNP's DNA—that is, privatisation by stealth. One of the submitters to the hearing was the Queensland Teachers' Union and in its submission it indicated that TAFE would be wilfully handicapped and placed at a commercial disadvantage by the QTAMA legislation. For example, at both the Toowoomba and South Bank campuses, TAFE Queensland was forced to make space available for private providers in spite of a preparedness and ability to pay rent on the facilities. Subsequent renovations were wasted when private registered training organisations did not proceed with rental arrangements. That is a clear demonstration of their path should they ever form government again in terms of privatising and selling the assets wholesale. Queenslanders know that under Labor we will always keep our assets.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Walker): Order!

Mr FURNER: Listen to the oxygen thieves opposite. Once again the member for Gregory will not table his Ernst & Young report. He lacks that intestinal fortitude and always will. He was the media adviser to the then agriculture minister and spent thousands on the Ernst & Young report and has not even had the ability to table it. Getting back to the bill—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock. Minister, I ask you to take your seat for a moment please. Member for Gregory, you are now warned under the standing orders.

Mr FURNER: Those opposite cannot be trusted. They cannot change their spots because behind the curtain of the LNP organisation they are bringing back the former premier to lead them through this. They pretend to shy away from the LNP's slash-and-burn legacy, but then they bring back its architect to help them do it again. The people of Queensland are not buying it. They are not falling for Campbell Newman and his friends again. It will be a tragedy at the end of this Leader of the Opposition's crusade when the Campbell Newman inspired LNP gets found out once again. I commend the bill to the House.