




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (4.52 pm): I rise to speak on the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill 2021. The Palaszczuk government is delivering Queensland's plan for economic recovery and, thanks to the efforts of all Queenslanders, this government is able to get on with the job of creating jobs. We are already seeing that in action. In fact, since the pandemic first impacted Australia in March last year, Queensland has seen the largest growth in jobs in the country. As we speak, we are rolling out a \$56 billion infrastructure guarantee, record investment in schools, hospitals and transport, and close to a billion dollars this year to protect our environment and create jobs.

Young people are making the most of Free TAFE for under 25s, and Queenslanders are upskilling in droves with new opportunities for traineeships and apprenticeships on projects right throughout the state. In our national parks, 800 jobs are being created with a \$50 million investment into new upgrades and investment in new renewable energy projects like our renewable energy zones, with one of those announced last week. We are unlocking projects like the Kaban wind farm, which is helping to turn Queensland into a renewable energy powerhouse.

This bill is a key component to continuing to deliver our economic recovery plan. It is a bill that will protect Queensland from the LNP's well-known debt reduction agenda to cut, sack and sell. Queenslanders will never forget when those opposite, under Campbell Newman and his ministers, including the Leader of the Opposition, cut 14,000 jobs—cut from vital services and projects right across the state—and tried to sell our public assets. When I speak to many people in my community today, they still talk about Campbell Newman and the LNP's razor gang. Those opposite pretend that these people are just numbers on a spreadsheet, but I assure them they are not. It is that arrogance of denying the very real impact which has led to those opposite being members of the opposition.

There are many examples that I can think of within my community. When I was doorknocking in 2019, I met with a woman by the name of Carmen, from memory, who lost her job at the Gold Coast University Hospital under the Newman government. We have been speaking to young Queenslanders across the state around the importance of access to mental health services. Under the debt reduction plan of those opposite it was proposed to close the Barrett Adolescent Centre, which was providing critical services to young Queenslanders.

It is the Palaszczuk government that will make sensible, prudent savings—savings that will ensure that our frontline services are sustainable and focused on the needs of the public—not debt reduction in the LNP sense of the word which, simply put, means one thing: to cut, sack and sell. When the LNP talk about savings and debt reduction, they mean gutting the front line, ripping healthcare and education services and taking away jobs from mums and dads right across Queensland—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Interjections will cease. Minister, to be consistent, I draw you back to the long title of the bill, please.

Ms SCANLON: As I said, when the LNP talk about savings and debt reduction, we know—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill, please.

Ms SCANLON: When it comes to responsible measures of savings and debt reduction, under our bill we have a very clear plan. The opposition had a very different plan. The member for Chatsworth, who was an assistant minister in the Newman government, told parliament that past behaviour is indeed the best way to predict future actions. Who can forget when they sacked 16 QBuild workers on the Gold Coast just before Christmas or when they sacked 54 nurses and midwives from local health services?

Unlike the LNP, the Palaszczuk government makes sensible savings that do not cut frontline services and do not hurt Queenslanders. That is what this bill achieves. It reduces debt, increases the efficiency of government by reducing the number of statutory authorities, improves how fees and charges are set, and reduces the cost of government advertising, securing \$3 million in direct savings.

One part of our broader \$3 million program is sensible savings. As the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, I can say that my department has implemented a number of measures to drive our economic recovery. For example, it has reduced travel, conferences, workshops and other supplies and services such as photocopying and telecommunications—for example, desk phones; reduced contractors and prioritised delivery outcomes across departmental programs and through a refocusing of grant programs; reduced paper use as part of the department's digital transformation; reduced advertising activities—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! No-one is on the warning list at the moment, but I will put some people there shortly.

Ms SCANLON:—focusing on digital and online information and communication directly with consumers and stakeholders through electronic communications; reduced the department's social media channels from 15 to eight; significantly limited the production of printed material and no longer prints glossy brochures; ensured annual reports and other documents have been simplified and streamlined and are published online as opposed to being printed; and ensured a highly disciplined approach is being applied to all sponsorship activities. These are what sensible measures look like.

When we look at what is happening in other states like Victoria and New South Wales, which have suffered credit downgrades, only Queensland has kept its secure position of major jurisdictions, a fiscal position kept strong after those opposite, the LNP, delivered a credit rating negative outlook for Queensland—that was their savings and debt reduction plan—a black mark thanks to the member for Clayfield and his colleagues like the opposition leader, who ruined the lives of thousands of families across Queensland. Guess which government got it removed? It was the Palaszczuk government.

We have rebuilt Queensland's financial capabilities, restored its credit metrics and, despite the pandemic, kept our economy moving. If those opposite had their way, we would be back to the debt reduction days of 'Nuclear Newman'. In fact, now he is back in the executive of the LNP and I am sure he is pulling the strings and making the moves behind the scenes, plotting once again to cut workers while telling them they have nothing to fear. It is reminiscent of a time when he, the opposition leader, the member for Everton, the member for Clayfield and plenty of others opposite had a debt reduction agenda of sacking 14,000 government workers, despite telling them they had nothing to fear; cutting around 4,400 health worker jobs, including 1,800 nurses and midwives; slashing \$288 million in employment programs, including Skilling Queenslanders for Work—a great program for young Queenslanders across this state; axing \$368 million in grants to the department of communities to support Queenslanders in need of assistance—you only need talk to the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre in my electorate to understand the impacts that had on my community; cutting \$120 million in funding to community groups from Queensland Health; cutting \$60 million from local government grants and subsidies; axing tenant advisory services; cutting the air travel subsidy scheme on Cape York, as the member for Cook just outlined; cutting the Premier's Literary Awards; and shutting seven schools.

They say they want to change, but how can we believe them when former Newman ministers, like the opposition leader, are running the show? In stark contrast, this government will continue to deliver Queensland's economic recovery plan while making sensible savings. We will deliver a \$56 billion infrastructure guarantee and more frontline positions in health, police, education and emergency services. We will invest close to a billion dollars to create jobs and protect our environment.



Hon. MAJ SCANLON (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (6.09 pm), continuing: The Palaszczuk government will make sensible, prudent savings—savings that will ensure we can continue to invest in the needs of the public in health, education, transport, roads and our national parks, which alone generate \$2.6 billion for our economy and indirectly support 17,000 jobs across our state.

Under the Palaszczuk government we are creating jobs in new industries. Our investment in the popular container refund scheme has already created more than 700 jobs across the state and put \$400 million back into the pockets of families, community groups and charities. The establishment of the renewable energy zones and Queensland's first publicly owned renewable energy company, CleanCo, will make sure that Queensland leads the way in jobs for the energy sector while also achieving our 50 per cent renewable energy target.

We know how those opposite feel about public ownership. We have heard a number of LNP MPs during this debate complain about putting the Titles Registry in the Future Fund because it means they cannot sell off the Titles Registry. The Titles Registry will be secured in public ownership and they will not be able to sell it, and they of course do not like this idea. Unlike those opposite, this government understands that Queenslanders want jobs and they want a government with a plan for economic recovery. They do not want cuts, they do not want to lose their jobs and they do not want public assets sold. That is what they said in 2015 and in 2017 and they said it again in 2020.

It has been interesting to hear some of those opposite make contributions around debt in this state while at the same time complaining about election commitments like the satellite hospital and other investments in health care when those opposite went to the election with no plan when it came to health care.

In fact, when it came to health care on the Gold Coast their plan was to deliver no additional services, no additional mental health expansion at the Gold Coast University Hospital and no plan for a satellite hospital. If those opposite had been elected we would not have seen any of this important infrastructure investment to deliver the sort of health care that a growing city like the Gold Coast needs.

It is a bit rich for those opposite to talk about debt, saying they want more in health but at the same time not actually committing to any of those critical investments in health. We will continue to back Queenslanders with this bill by delivering sensible debt reduction and savings while investing in frontline services, infrastructure investment and protecting our environment. I commend the bill to the House.