




Speech By  
**Michael Hart**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 May 2021

### **DEBT REDUCTION AND SAVINGS BILL**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (3.38 pm): I rise to add to the debate on the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill. In fact, I was not going to speak on this bill today because it is a farce, and we all know it is a farce. This is a bill about smoke and mirrors. Who would think for a second that the Queensland Labor Party has any intention of reducing the debt in this state, because it does not have a very good history of it, does it? It seems to just blow out debt after debt after debt.

I was interested to note the government moving the Titles Registry into A Debt Retirement Fund. This is all about the government trying to hide the fact that it is fiscally incompetent and has ruined the finances of this state because the ratings agencies were starting to look at it and say, 'Your equity-to-liability ratio is starting to get out of control.' The government had a look at that and said, 'We'll put some money into A Debt Retirement Fund,' and it was caught out when it tried to move money from the defined benefit fund.

Members will remember that the LNP told the government that this would not work because we were in the middle of a COVID situation last year and the share market was turning down and the defined benefit fund had lost ground and the actuaries were telling the government that it could not take out the sort of money that it wanted to take out, so it had a look around and picked something that it thinks it can capitalise on. Strangely enough, it has put a \$4.1 billion valuation on the Titles Registry—a massive amount more than New South Wales or even Victoria put on theirs.

Normally when you capitalise something—and I realise that most on the other side are not used to looking at spreadsheets or the balance sheets of any sort of company whereas those of us on this side have been running businesses for years and years and years and we know how to do that—it is quite easy to put a valuation on it in that you look to see how much money it earns and you put a multiple on top of that. It is surprising that the government cannot tell us how much money the Titles Registry actually earns. Maybe when the Treasurer gets up in reply he could actually tell us how much in a year the Titles Registry provides back to the government.

The government is going to move this entity into this so-called \$4.1 billion fund so it can change the equity-to-liability ratio and stop any sort of downgrade from happening. However, I think the ratings agencies will be smart enough to see through that—I really do—and I can see a downgrade in rating coming in the future. The government says it is moving the titles office into this fund in order to not only avoid a downgrade in its ratings but also protect it from being sold, because those opposite seem to think that the LNP would sell it.

We all know that the LNP has sold nothing. We were honest with the people of Queensland, unlike the Labor Party in the past. We went to an election and said to the people of Queensland, 'We will lease out some assets.' Anybody who has been in business knows that a lease and a sale are two completely different things. When you sell something, members of the Labor Party, you do not own it anymore. When you lease it to someone, you might not have control of it but you still own it and eventually it comes back to you. There is a big difference between a lease and a sale. Once you sell it it is gone, and of course the Queensland Labor Party sold \$16½ billion worth of assets.

I want to counter some things that the member for Ferny Grove and the member for Kurwongbah said during their contributions—

**Mr King** interjected.

**Mr HART:** So-called facts; I take that interjection. The member said that the LNP sold Queensland Motorways. Let us just examine that statement, because Queensland Motorways was sold by the Labor government in 2011 to QIC for \$3 billion.

**Mr BAILEY:** Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, I rise to a point of order. The member is not speaking to the bill. He is taking us on a long tour of history, and his own ruling when he was in the chair reflected that.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, I rise to a point of order. There have been three days of debate with both sides of the House talking about who sold what, who leased what. I think the member is responding to other contributions in the debate, which has been happening for three days now.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I do not pick the point of order that you are making there, and you might want to give me a chance to rule on the previous point of order. Minister, with regard to your point of order, I just want to clarify that in your statements regarding the time that the member for Burleigh spent as the temporary Speaker you were not reflecting on the chair. If you were, I would ask you to withdraw that.

**Mr BAILEY:** The matter was dealt with when it was raised. I withdrew it at the time. I could have taken it further and I did not.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** No, Minister, I am talking about your statements now. While making the point of order you made statements about the member's actions while he was in the chair. I would ask you to withdraw that. It seems like a reflection on the chair to me.

**Mr BAILEY:** I withdraw.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. With regard to your point of order, member for Kawana, there has been broad ranging debate over three days. There have been alternative approaches to management of the budget explored by many members of this House. I am listening carefully to the debate and we are staying somewhere broadly within both the long title of the debate and the topics that have been raised and rebutted.

**Mr HART:** In direct response to the member for Ferny Grove and the member for Kurwongbah, Queensland Motorways was sold to QIC. In return for the sale to QIC of Queensland Motorways, the Queensland government was given \$3 billion. The Queensland government no longer owns it. It belongs to QIC, so it is impossible for the next LNP government to sell something that we do not own. We do not own it and we did not in any way benefit. The \$7½ billion that QIC got for Queensland Motorways did not come to the Queensland government, so we did not sell it. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be writing to the Speaker about the contributions of both of those members.

We have heard that the government is serious about debt reduction and it has managed to save \$3 million, which every Labor member in this place has now spent. If we thought for a second that the Queensland Labor Party was serious about saving money, then it would not be wasting the money that it is wasting on some of the infrastructure programs that have blown out dramatically. To quote the Minister for Transport earlier when he was talking about light rail stage 3, that has blown out by \$330 million. That is a 50 per cent increase from the business case put forward only 18 months ago for light rail stage 3. What are the people of Queensland getting in return for that? They are getting absolutely nothing. There are no more stops, there are no more trains, there is no more scenery, there is no more anything for \$330 million. Instead, those opposite made a grubby deal with the unions. Their best practice industrial conditions that have been put in place have led to a massive blowout that equates to 110 times the savings that this smoke-and-mirrors bill is going to provide back to the government.

In 2015 the government had a brilliant idea to put in place the Productivity Commission and Building Queensland. It said a number of things about both of those entities in terms of how good they would be for the people of Queensland, yet now a few years later it is completely trashing them. I do not normally agree with anything the Greens have to say and I did not agree with most of the speech from the member for Maiwar earlier, but I have to agree when he said that the Productivity Commission and Building Queensland inside Treasury will not give the same independent advice as those bodies did in the past. Therefore, I do not support the moving of either of those entities into Queensland Treasury.

I do not support the capitalisation of the Titles Registry. I ask the minister to tell us how much the Titles Registry earns in a year so that we can get an idea of what sort of multiple he has put on the Titles Registry, whether it is 100 or 200 times, which is completely unacceptable to anybody who knows anything about finance. I might leave it at that because we all want to go home eventually, do we not?