




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

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 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.12 pm): I rise to address the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2021 which addresses unplanned supplementary appropriations for the last financial year. As we have seen across the duration of his tenure, the Treasurer is overspending and underdelivering and it is Queenslanders who are paying the price. His lack of leadership, inability to control a budget and a failure to plan for the future of Queensland has the small and family business sector in dire straits. Even considering the creative accounting approach that the inflated Titles Registry valuation embodies, Queensland's debt continues to grow and will soon reach \$130 billion. As we have seen time and time again in recent years, this Labor state government is borrowing to pay for recurrent operational expenditures, just as it is in this bill, not on infrastructure, not on investment to grow the state and most certainly not to support small and family businesses in their hour of need.

This government loves to spend Queenslanders' money, but it could not find the money to help thousands of Queensland small and family businesses who are the backbone of our state's economy, small and family business who, along with their staff, have borne the brunt of the fallout from COVID-19, small and family businesses who have been crying out for help from the state government so they could battle on until trade returns and they can support themselves.

It is great that international visitors are now able to return to Queensland, but there needs to be a tourism and small business sector here when they arrive and as it stands every day another small business closes its doors and Queenslanders are being laid off. Business confidence is plummeting every single day that the Premier does not release a support package. We must protect Queensland small and family businesses and the Queenslanders that they employ. The LNP have repeatedly put suggestions on the table, including targeted grants, payroll tax relief and sick leave cover, but the government has ignored those suggestions.

It is a slap in the face of every single Queensland small business that in their hour of need the Treasurer is still dipping his hand into their pockets making them pay their payroll tax for the privilege of keeping Queenslanders in a job. In the last quarter the state government's lack of support saw business confidence crash in Queensland by 17 per cent. Business owners have no confidence in the Treasurer and his ability to manage the state budget. Sales and revenue were down last quarter despite what we have heard from those opposite and it is all written plain as day in the latest CCIQ Pulse survey information which is compiled directly from businesses across the state.

What was most concerning in the CCIQ Pulse survey is that 63 per cent of businesses and their staff have said that they are being impacted by mental health challenges. This is up significantly from the last quarter. This should have been ringing alarm bells for the state government, especially considering the current mental health crisis in Queensland. The concerns raised by these small businesses fell on deaf ears. Instead of listening to that cry for help and acting, the Treasurer has instead sought to discredit the Pulse survey just as he did when the CommSec State of the States

report reported some inconvenient facts in years past. Rather than shoot the messenger the Treasurer should be listening and working with organisations like CCIQ and local chambers of commerce who are the voice of Queensland small and family businesses.

When the Premier's mixed messages told Queenslanders to stay at home in January, it was mum-and-dad retailers and small hospitality venues who paid the price. They were the ones who went without customers to pay the bills and they did not get any help from the state government either. Small businesses were forced to pay double just to keep their shops and cafes open: one payment for the workers who are in a job and a second payment to the staff who are forced to isolate at home. It was impossible for these businesses to keep their heads above water and many have told me that they were forced to take out second mortgages just to survive. Business owners poured their entire savings in just to keep their employees in a job while the Treasurer ignored them and kept his head in the sand.

This state government likes to pretend it cares about small and family businesses but its actions tell another story. It does not listen to small and family business owners and in their hour of need the Premier and her government turned their back on them. Indeed, it seems the Premier was unaware of the hurt that small and family businesses were dealing with until she visited a local takeaway restaurant in mid-January. It makes one wonder what the minister for small business was doing. She has been missing in action for the better part of a month, missing in action when small and family businesses have been in a fight for their life.

By contrast, my LNP colleagues and I have been travelling the state listening to small and family businesses. In Rockhampton, on the Gold Coast, in Bundaberg and in the Brisbane CBD the message from many small and family businesses has been the same: we are hurting now more than ever, more than in the lockdowns, and we need help to survive. That feedback has informed the suggestions that we have made to address the state government's failure to plan. Those small businesses needed support weeks ago. It is too late now for many who have already closed their doors and walked away from their dreams. Employees are out of a job. Many small and family business owners are left with nothing but a mountain of debt. Hundreds of jobs have been lost all because the Treasurer cannot plan and cannot manage a budget. Other states managed to support the small business sector, but in Queensland they were ignored. The government's failure to plan meant that the goalposts kept changing for small and family businesses and it certainly did not help when the only thing being delivered by the state government were mixed messages.

If the Treasurer did plan, he would understand that small and family businesses contribute greatly to Queensland's economy. Forty-three per cent of the private sector workforce are employed by small and family businesses. A stronger economy allows for more investment in other areas such as health, education and support for the most vulnerable. Small and family business underpin that economy. Queensland needs an economy for everyone and everyone includes small and family business.

Before I finish I also want to address the comments from those opposite with respect to skills and training in Queensland and the 'record investment' in skills and training. I might mention to those opposite that the majority, over 80 per cent, is funded by the federal government that they criticise day in, day out for failing to work with them but who has picked up the tab time and time again for the projects, policies and initiatives that this state is unable to fund and manage—projects like the Mooloolah River Interchange in my electorate on the Sunshine Coast, a project which is a state road that is being funded 50 per cent by the federal government simply because the state government cannot manage its finances. It is simply not good enough.

I note there is no additional funding in the bill for TAFE despite what we have heard from those opposite. I call on those opposite to work constructively with the federal government rather than play petty politics to advance their own party's political ambitions at the next federal election. It might be interesting to see if the tone changes should the outcome not be in the LNP's favour at the federal election. I wonder whether or not we will see the crowing that we saw before the last election at which Bill Shorten was soundly defeated. I remember quite well when minister after minister stood up and extolled the virtues of Bill Shorten, who was going to be the prime minister, but we did not hear anything after the election. I will admit that I was surprised at the outcome too. It was a beautiful thing to see those opposite completely silenced. How good is Queensland?

Queenslanders deserve to be supported. Through the pandemic Queenslanders in the electorate of Currumbin have done it tougher than most as have those who live in the border regions in towns such as Goondiwindi and Inglewood. Right across the state Queenslanders have done it tough through the pandemic but, unfortunately, in many cases we have seen the government turn their back on them. They like to talk the big talk but they go missing in action. It is only when it becomes politically inconvenient or when it is on the front page of the newspaper or on the *Today* show or *Sunrise* that we finally see the Premier step up to the mark.

Mr FURNER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 236, relevance, in respect to the bills before the House. The member for Buderim is clearly irrelevant when it comes to his contribution to these bills.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Gerber): Member for Buderim, I have allowed some leniency in relation to the long title of the bills. There are a lot of matters that can fall within the appropriation titles. You have the call and I ask you to continue your contribution.

Mr MICKELBERG: I appreciate the guidance, particularly from the former senator who is protecting his federal colleagues. I acknowledge that there is \$447 million in these supplementary appropriations, some of which is funding additional expenditure in relation to QFES and the Queensland police's commitment to the COVID response. I commend QFES and the Queensland police for the work that they have done, in spite of this government, through the COVID pandemic.

Unfortunately, my local police consistently tell me that they do not have enough resources and that they need more police on the beat. The manifestation of that is simply that crime is out of control in many places in Queensland. It is even a problem in Buderim, which I admit is one of the better places if not the best place in Queensland. We do have crime problems just like Townsville and places such as Ferny Grove, where young thugs are holding communities to ransom because of a failure to invest in youth justice, a failure to resource the police adequately and a failure to provide the police with the tools that they need to keep our communities safe.

It is time for those opposite to stop talking the talk; they need to start walking the walk. They need to fund the police adequately. Unfortunately, hollow announcements about helicopters and drones will not cut it. We need more boots on the ground in Townsville, Cairns, the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast and Brisbane. Without that we will only see those problems escalate, and Queenslanders deserve better.