



Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE


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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (4.18 pm), in reply: I thank all those members who have provided their support for the appropriation bills before the House and the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill. As I said on Tuesday, this is a budget for our times and a budget for all Queenslanders. It is a budget that delivers good jobs, provides even better services and supports Queensland's great lifestyle.

More than 206,000 Queenslanders have found jobs since COVID reached Australia. Queensland has added more jobs than any other state or territory, and as many jobs as New South Wales and Victoria combined. We are delivering record budgets in health and education, including the largest hospital building program and the largest mental health investment in Queensland's history.

Our infrastructure budget will connect more communities and businesses, preserving and protecting Queensland's great lifestyle and supporting 48,000 jobs directly through our infrastructure program in the forthcoming financial year alone.

I would like to thank all of those officials up-front who worked so tirelessly to bring this budget into existence, including officers of the Queensland Treasury and the Queensland Revenue Office. I also want to acknowledge the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel. The staff of the parliamentary counsel's office work very hard and diligently for all governments. They worked very hard particularly on the revenue measures before the House and I want to acknowledge them just as I want to acknowledge my staff. It is the unsung work of these selfless public servants which lays the foundation for the better services that this budget delivers.

The budget delivers for Queenslanders whether they live in Weipa or Woodridge. I was moved to hear from members about how the investments we are making through this budget would transform their communities. I would also like to address some of the issues raised by the members opposite during the debate.

The member for Broadwater began his remarks by telling Queenslanders how much he listened. Fifty-one minutes of talk later, he had finally finished telling Queenslanders how good he was at listening. The member for Broadwater spoke for longer than I did and he announced nothing except a committee. Never has a budget reply taken so long to say so little. To be fair, the Leader of the Opposition happily added his talking points about Queensland's 'great lifestyle'. All Queenslanders should know that when the LNP run out of slogans, they will come after yours.

There were plenty of own goals from the member for Broadwater like sledging the 'skyscraper office' that his mentor Campbell Newman conceived and the LNP planned to move into; cherrypicking data to avoid talking about the biggest 12-month expansion in housing approvals on record, which happened last year under our Labor government; and crying crocodile tears about job security when his government landed the biggest blow to job security in Queensland history: sacking 14,000 workers who were told they had 'nothing to fear'. From the alternative Premier there were no alternatives, no substance, no vision and certainly no plan for Queensland. There were no plans to fund any of the budget measures the LNP would hand down, just more cuts.

The leader of the shadow cabinet in Queensland used shadowy language to quote the cutting, sacking and selling his alternative government would administer. The member claimed he wanted to increase FTEs, but he did not want costs to go up. The member for Broadwater claimed he wanted to give more back to Queenslanders, but he also wanted the government to retain more revenue. The member for Broadwater claimed he wanted even more infrastructure delivered at the same time he wanted the fiscal deficit to fall. It was a classic exercise in LNP maths: something did not quite add up.

I know the LNP are still burnt by the costings calamity delivered by the member for Everton before the election. However, the member for Broadwater's budget reply was different to the member for Everton's costing debacle. It was not so much an exercise in stupidity; it was an agenda of savagery. The truth is the LNP's agenda will add up the same way it always does: by cutting, by sacking and by selling.

So committed is the member for Broadwater to sacking public servants he will even have to sack one of his own ministers. The member for Broadwater's proposed three-person economic team for Treasury, finance and women's economic security means that he will have to sack either the member for Kawana as the minister for finance in their government or the member for Toowoomba South, who would be the treasurer. If two out of three members of that three-person economic team must be women, then who will go? Will it be the member for Kawana or will it be the member for Toowoomba South? If two economic ministers have to be women, which one of the blokes will the Leader of the Opposition sack? I look forward to seeing the 'Hunger Games' begin, but maybe they will continue just to ease the member for Toowoomba South out of the road.

While the member for Broadwater spent his budget reply promising nothing and saying nothing, at least the member for Toowoomba South promised he would say nothing. Fresh from the onerous and exhausting task of what proved to be a single solitary question he asked of me about the budget during budget week, the shadow Treasurer said he would leave it to his colleagues to talk about the revenue side of the budget. The member for Toowoomba South said the uplift in royalties this year was being 'squandered' on the better frontline services that so many Queenslanders rely on. Our Labor government is supporting more doctors, more nurses, more ambulance officers, more teachers and more teacher aides, but the LNP considers our record health and education investments as 'squandering' the boom. There really is nothing they will not cut.

The member for Toowoomba South tried his best to trash Labor's nation-leading job creation record, alleging it was 'underpinned by part-time jobs'. That is what the member for Toowoomba South said. The member is incorrect. Admittedly, there is nothing new there, but to place the truth on the parliamentary record and to ensure the member stops misleading the House in the future, I point out that our government has created 206,000 jobs since COVID began—more than New South Wales and Victoria combined—95 per cent of which are full-time jobs. The member for Toowoomba South should stop misleading the parliament by saying jobs creation in this House is 'underpinned by part-time jobs'. Ninety-five per cent of the jobs our government has created since the start of COVID have been full-time jobs. I look forward to receiving an apology from the member for Toowoomba South as do the people of this state.

Desperate to find a downside in Queensland's economic performance, the strongest in the country, the member for Toowoomba South also tried to talk down private sector investment. Over the past year private investment in Queensland has grown almost twice as fast as the national average. Private business investment has grown more than three times faster in Queensland than in the rest of Australia.

The member for Toowoomba South also tried to criticise Labor's lower borrowings. Thanks to our government's health response and our targeted economic response, all of which were opposed by the LNP, Queensland's borrowings are much lower in every year of the forward estimates. We have cut debt in half from its highest forecasts in the 2020 budget. Even in the furthest year of the forward estimates, Queensland's debt is lower in absolute numbers—lower as a ratio to revenue, lower as a share of state output and lower per person than it is in New South Wales or Victoria. I will very happily put Labor's record up against the Liberal Party's record every single day.

On the very day we delivered our state budget, we had a demonstration of what the Liberal Party, the party of the shadow Treasurer and member for Toowoomba South, is doing to the fiscal position of New South Wales. Net debt in New South Wales is four times the size of Queensland this year at \$78 billion. Over the next four years net debt in New South Wales will blast through \$90 billion, blast through \$100 billion, blast through \$110 billion to reach, for the member for Chatsworth's benefit, \$114.8 billion by 2026, and that is net debt. After accounting for New South Wales' larger population, economy and tax take, their debt will still be twice as high as Queensland's by 2026. Even on News Corp's grossly inflated measures of debt, New South Wales will still be \$92 billion more indebted than Queensland. While Queensland will post a \$1.9 billion surplus in the 2021-22 financial year, New South Wales is racking up a staggering \$16.6 billion deficit because that is what you get from the Liberal Party and the LNP.

While our government is alive to the risks of higher global interest rates, the Queensland Treasury Corporation has worked diligently to ensure our debt servicing costs make up a smaller share of our government's revenue than they did under the LNP. I am reliably informed that the member for Kawana's contribution to the long title of the bill did not start until there were only three minutes left of his 15-minute contribution. The shadow finance minister has shown no interest in the most important economic and financial document in Queensland. So I will be muted in my reply to the member for Kawana, in the same way that my social media team has muted his replies to my Facebook and Twitter posts, particularly those relating to my dog Scout, with whom he seems to have a strange and unusual obsession.

When the LNP did talk about the budget, they talked about promises on tax. 'A tax is a tax and a promise is a promise,' said the member for Broadwater—unless, it seems, a tax is a levy and the promise is made by the LNP. The last time that the LNP promised no new taxes—the member for Chatsworth was a member of that government—they promptly increased the burden on Queenslanders, including hiking coal royalties by \$1.64 billion; increasing insurance duty, including on the family home, by \$990 million; increasing stamp duty by \$361 million; increasing the emergency management levy by \$187.6 million; and increasing the health services levy by \$22 million. The list of broken LNP promises goes on.

The Leader of the Opposition has attempted to mount a scare campaign about payroll tax reform. It is comical to see the activity of the LNP as they attempt to address what we are doing with payroll tax. It would be comical if it was not so serious. We know that the LNP opposes the increase in payroll tax—we know that. What does that mean? It means a cut of \$1.6 billion to mental health services in Queensland. Let me make it clear: at the same time as we are implementing a levy on one per cent of Queensland businesses, our government is cutting payroll tax for small- and medium-sized family businesses in Queensland.

The LNP like to talk about small- and medium-sized family businesses, but when it comes to the Labor Party giving those businesses a tax cut the LNP said absolutely nothing. More than 12,000 Queensland businesses will be better off under our measures. By the LNP's own logic, our payroll tax reforms should drive more foot traffic, more sales and more jobs right across Queensland. At the same time, the mental health levy will apply to just the top one per cent of Queensland businesses. We thank them for their contribution to mental health funding, but will the mental health levy drive up prices like the opposition allege?

On the Labor side, we like to base our policies on facts and evidence. If the LNP's argument holds any water, we might see higher prices where a mental health levy is in effect, say in Victoria. I consulted the Woolworths catalogue for Brisbane and Melbourne—a far more reliable source of truth and information than the LNP. The mental health levy in Victoria did not seem to be hitting prices at all. In fact, where prices were different, I was shocked to find that they were cheaper in Victoria—where a higher mental health is actually in place, and at a higher rate than we are proposing. It is cheaper in Victoria, where the mental health levy is supposedly destroying business and destroying the economy of that state.

At Woolworths in Melbourne, a 600-millilitre bottle of Powerade is \$1.75—that is seven cents cheaper than in Brisbane. At Woolworths in Melbourne, a 24-pack of Coca-Cola is \$17.30—that is \$3.50 cheaper than in Brisbane. The real insult to every Queenslanders is that two cases of Queensland's staple XXXX Gold in Melbourne is \$88—\$8 cheaper than in Brisbane. We have had enough of the nonsense and the autobabble from the Leader of the Opposition, saying in this House and saying publicly that the mental health levy would drive up costs and prices for Queenslanders. What a load of arrant nonsense. It is complete nonsense and something the LNP must stop saying. There is a higher levy in Victoria, and it has not resulted in any price increases in that state.

I have said consistently this week that the promise we made before the election was the promise that we made to the people of Queensland. We have kept that promise. The people knew that promise and what did they do? They voted to return the Palaszczuk Labor government. The LNP has, of course, opposed the mental health levy and our mental health plan. The onus is on the LNP to explain, when they vote against the mental health levy, how savagely they will cut mental health services in Queensland. We now know that cuts to mental health, hospitals and to regional communities will come. How long will it be before they close Jacaranda Place, like they closed the Barrett Adolescent Centre? I look forward to the member for Burdekin explaining to the people of Moranbah why he does not support a new hospital in that community. I look forward to him going to that community and saying, 'I oppose the revenue measures in the budget and you will not receive a new hospital.' I look forward to him explaining that cut to the people of Moranbah, just as I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition travelling the length and breadth of Queensland and saying, 'The hospital and health plan of our government is null and void. There is no revenue, we oppose it and you will not get new or refurbished hospitals.'

Not only has the Leader of the Opposition refused to back our mental health plan; he has also opposed our government's proposal for progressive coal royalty tiers to help fund hospital and health services across Queensland. Regarding our progressive coal royalty changes, let me say this: we disagree very strongly that this proposal will cost jobs. 'There are many things that go into the cost and feasibility of mines—coal royalties are only one part'—

Mr Stevens: What about JP Morgan?

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. We disagree very strongly that this will cost jobs. 'There are many things that go into the cost and feasibility of mines—coal royalties are only one part.' I took the interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach because they are not my words; they are the words of the member for Clayfield. We should never forget that the member for Clayfield said those exact words on 11 September 2012, supported entirely by the member for Mermaid Beach, after handing down his horror budget that increased coal royalties by \$1.6 billion. That amount is more than 30 per cent higher than the \$1.2 billion forecast to come from our royalty change. What is worse, the LNP's royalty hike was imposed in the middle of an industry downturn—something the member for Mermaid Beach was very proud of at the time. In that time in 2012, Queensland had been rocked by a string of mine closures and the loss of more than 2,000 jobs, including BHP's Gregory open-cut mine and Norwich Park, with Anglo American and Rio Tinto also cutting back or closing operations.

In contrast, right now we are in a boom—mines are opening or being recommissioned. While coal companies were not expecting a run-up in prices to this point, they have captured all the benefits. The metallurgical coal price has increased by 110 per cent in the past year. Even under the proposed progressive scheme, the coal price, net of royalties, is still 70 per cent higher than it was when miners were making their plans a year ago. The time is right for a prudent royalty measure to deliver more hospitals to regional Queensland.

The coal industry and the resources industry will be a strong part of the Queensland economy for many years to come. The LNP's opposition to our royalty changes means that they do not support making coal companies pay their fair share. It also means that the LNP need to be up-front with the people of Queensland and explain how they will implement their cut of \$1.2 billion from hospitals. The Leader of the Opposition and the members for Coomera and Theodore will need to explain to the people of the northern Gold Coast why they will not build a new hospital at Coomera.

It was more important for the LNP to protect windfall coal profits than the health of Gold Coast residents. The Leader of the Opposition and the members for Toowoomba North, Toowoomba South, Condamine, Lockyer and the new member for Callide will need to explain to the people of their communities why they will not build the new Toowoomba Hospital.

Mr Watts: For \$20 million we are not going to get much done, Treasurer.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection. I look forward to the member for Toowoomba North explaining why he is opposing the increase in coal royalties. The members for Toowoomba North, Toowoomba South, Condamine and the new member for Callide would rather pay coalmining CEOs than pay doctors, nurses and midwives and delivering improved mental health services.

Mr Stewart: Shame!

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for resources. It is a shame and it is a terrible blight on those members opposite. Across the state they will have to go around stripping local communities of their hospital and health services—in the great LNP tradition. The question for the

Leader of the Opposition is simple: why does he and the LNP not support the windfall profits of coal companies being returned to the people of Queensland for a very good and proper public purpose: improved health care?

We know the member for Broadwater once held the people of Kingaroy hostage by telling them they had to choose between selling the Tarong Power Station or getting a new hospital. They could not choose. He went into Kingaroy and said the only way you will get a new hospital is to sell the Tarong Power Station. Does anybody in this House think that the member for Broadwater has changed one iota? Of course he has not. This is a man who has said publicly, since he became the Leader of the Opposition, 'I support cuts, just not savage ones.' That is what he has said. He has never denied it. He has never said he misspoke. He never said it was not true. That is what he believes. He has to explain that. He held the people of Kingaroy hostage once. The question for the Leader of the Opposition is why is he holding the people of Queensland hostage again?

In my remaining time I would like to reflect on the contributions from other members. The member for Mermaid Beach called our budget 'the best recycling budget in the history of Queensland'. Our government is rightly proud of our budget's environmental initiatives, including \$964 million over five years to transform the resource recovery industry. When it comes to recycling, the member for Mermaid Beach takes the cake. The member gave the same speech that he has given year in, year out—garbage in, garbage out—for the last eight budgets. He crashed his own primary vote by 20 points and transformed his once-safe electorate into a marginal. That requires a very special set of skills. The member for Mermaid Beach has a complete disregard for the people of his electorate, the people of the Gold Coast, the people of Queensland and for the public servants of this state, including the State Actuary to whom he has still refused to apologise eight months after impugning the integrity of the State Actuary in Queensland.

The member for Nanango was so opposed to our government's mental health commitment I could not believe she said this: she cruelly suggested it was a pretext for the mental health levy. That is what the member for Nanango said. She was so opposed to the government's mental health commitment that she said it was a pretext to imposing a mental health levy. Can I put on the public record that I completely reject the member for Nanango's imputation absolutely out of hand. Our government, the Labor government, is committed to a sustainable investment in mental health. Our record investment in mental health services is a testament to our care for Queenslanders.

The member for Scenic Rim strangely boasted about the speed of his Facebook posting in relation to the Beaudesert Hospital maternity team winning an award. He took a day to post, while he said the team at the hospital took a month to acknowledge themselves. Maybe that is because they were busy birthing babies. If the member for Scenic Rim wants to ease the pressure on hospital staff so they can acknowledge their achievements on Facebook, I would suggest he join with the other members of the LNP who are benefiting from new hospitals—until they cut them—and vote for the mental health levy and new progressive royalty tiers.

I also look forward and await the thanks of the member for Scenic Rim for investing \$18 million into his electorate to rebuild the iconic Binna Burra Lodge. That investment is not being made in a Labor electorate; it is being made in the Scenic Rim. I look forward to receiving thanks from the member for Scenic Rim for rebuilding that iconic lodge in an iconic part of Queensland that will benefit his community for generations to come.

Of course, I cannot talk about the opposition to our mental health plan without honourable mentions of the members for Maiwar and South Brisbane. As I noted in the House this morning, the member for Maiwar and the member for South Brisbane will be voting to repeal the mental health levy and cut mental health services for Queenslanders. I could not believe it when I read the dissenting report of the member for South Brisbane opposing the implementation of a payroll tax levy to support mental health. This shows the Greens political party up for everything that everybody who has spent five minutes observing politics and observing the Greens knows: it is all just a show, it is all just virtue signalling. When it comes to hard decisions that have to be made to support the vulnerable—and don't the Greens political party go on endlessly about supporting the vulnerable, the weak and the disadvantaged—they run away. They ran away from that levy. They put it in black and white in that report. I can assure members that every day I serve in this parliament I will be reminding the people of Queensland, including the people of the federal division of Ryan, the federal division of Brisbane and the federal division of Griffith, of the gross double standards.

Mr Powell: Stop taking their preferences then.

Mr DICK: I will take the interjection from the member opposite. The only political party that has worked hard to elect a Greens member in this House was the LNP when they preferenced the Greens. That is what you did, member for Glass House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Through the chair, Treasurer.

Mr DICK: You elected the Greens member for South Brisbane. That is your responsibility.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are almost there, folks. Treasurer, your comments will come through the chair.

Mr DICK: In conclusion, this is a budget for our times, it is a budget for all Queenslanders and it is a budget that we are proud of. We are so proud to have made the tough decisions, not run away from them like the Greens, not avoid them and, in fact, cut them like the LNP. There is a reason this government was re-elected and that is because we are a government of consistency, of honesty, of virtue and of absolute commitment to the people of this state. We are proud of this budget. We are proud of the appropriation bills. We are proud of the Revenue Bill. I absolutely commend all of them to the House.