



Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE


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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (5.10 pm), in reply: I want to begin by thanking all those members who provided their support for these bills. These bills represent two core values of the Palaszczuk Labor government: firstly, nation-leading economic reform to key sectors of the economy; and, secondly, ensuring that vital services and infrastructure are delivered to the people of this state. I want to first turn to the appropriation bills. In this debate we have heard a lot of overcooked LNP rhetoric about the supplementary appropriations, with those opposite falsely claiming they are a bad thing. That rhetoric and those statements have no merit. They convince no-one and are a waste of the parliament's time.

I want to put on the record up-front that as Treasurer of Queensland, I could not be prouder to seek this supplementary appropriation for the 2021-22 financial year for unforeseen expenditure. There is not one aspect of this unforeseen expenditure that I regret nor is it expenditure that should be regretted. That is because this unforeseen expenditure saved Queenslanders—both their lives and their livelihoods. That financial year had some extraordinary curve balls for our state and our nation and it is only right and proper that the Queensland government stepped up to meet everything demanded of it, whether foreseen or otherwise. As I said earlier this week, Queensland's economy is more than a profit-and-loss statement, and we will never apologise for stepping up to spend when our state needs it. The unforeseen expenditure in this bill is the written proof that the Queensland government did exactly that.

Collectively, the government has responded with \$15.2 billion in additional financial assistance to support Queenslanders. We can see from other jurisdictions the extent to which these types of unforeseen issues can arise. Just look at New South Wales. New South Wales had the equivalent of unforeseen expenditure of \$17.8 billion for exigencies of government during the year 2021-22. That is around six times what Queensland expended. Yet when confronted with the fact, what did we hear from the LNP? Nothing! We heard absolutely nothing. Is that not funny? All through COVID the LNP looked to New South Wales. The LNP demanded 64 times that the border with New South Wales be opened, but when it comes to unforeseen expenditure, up goes the banana curtain. A mental block is erected between Queensland and New South Wales at the Tweed. New South Wales does not exist; Queensland is an island.

I make no criticism of the New South Wales government or their extraordinary levels of unforeseen expenditure. When you have a financial year like we had, like New South Wales had, like Australia had—when you have those financial years in Queensland and New South Wales there is

going to be unforeseen expenditure. Of course, in other areas our government, like New South Wales, has chosen to invest where other circumstances deemed it appropriate. We paid out the waste levy to councils in advance, which can I say the Leader of the Opposition welcomed in his budget reply but now rejects. We seek appropriate constitutional and parliamentary appropriation for the very expenditure that he supported in his budget reply but condemned in the House this week. We successfully administered the Morrison LNP government's HomeBuilder program and the Morrison LNP government's financial assistance grants for councils. All of these have contributed to unforeseen expenditure, which under the Constitution we have to bring into this House for appropriate parliamentary approval. In most of those cases that money has been repaid to us as revenue—or will be at a later date.

Of course, there is also money that we spend on vital infrastructure. The LNP would not understand about that because they bragged about cutting infrastructure and the infrastructure budget when they were in government. We brought forward spending of hundreds of millions of dollars on Bruce Highway upgrades, forming part of unforeseen expenditure for which we quite properly seek parliamentary approval.

As I mentioned, the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill delivers important economic reforms for our state. It will provide long-term funding certainty for the industry and for Racing Queensland. It has been a bit hard to hear it—a little bit quiet—but I think this reform may, in fact, have the support of the LNP. However, they could not admit that and had to conceal their support under a blizzard of misdirection and misrepresentations or contributions otherwise filed in a folder marked 'miscellaneous LNP nonsense'. It has been a while since I had to listen to an LNP debate and I had some hope, naive as I was. I thought maybe—just maybe—we might have heard a policy contribution by the LNP. During the course of the debate—

A government member interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the minister. I will not hold my breath because during the debate I do not think I heard a single, solitary policy idea, reform or suggestion. The LNP has nothing to do as an opposition, yet they come up with nothing.

Let's face the facts. The LNP have supported every revenue measure in the budget I have brought into this House as Treasurer. They voted in support of every single revenue measure passed by the parliament in the budget sitting week. I welcome them supporting these revenue measures time after time, as they did during the budget sitting week, but the LNP should have the honesty to admit that they supported the government's agenda on tax and revenue. They should cut out all of the pointless, meandering complaint and criticism, and maybe—just maybe—the LNP should do some work.

A case in point is payroll tax as it affects medical practitioners. Over and over we heard them this week demanding unspecified changes to arrangements to payroll tax. They cannot say what or how or why; they all just regurgitated LNP talking points. Yet these payroll tax arrangements were exactly the same arrangements they presided over when they were in government. I think the LNP backbench is being let down by a front bench who do not think, do not plan and do not do any work at all.

We also heard all sorts of bluster and bravado about the removal of the interstate land tax loophole, yet when the actual reform was before the House in the budget in June they voted for it. The LNP voted aye for the reform.

Mr Janetzki: The Premier voted for it, too.

Mr DICK: I get that the opposition are frustrated; they support a measure that is not now proceeding, but it does not mean that the LNP get to rewrite history. Their conduct just shows the craven politics and the bad faith that underpins everything this current Leader of the Opposition and the LNP do. On the one hand, the Leader of the Opposition came in here, supported the revenue measures before the House and voted aye. Then a few months later he started complaining about them. Then he comes in here and attacks not only the new revenue measures but also the old revenue measures, including the payroll tax provisions that he presided over as a cabinet minister in the Newman government. Then to top it all off, the member for Broadwater now demands more spending in his own electorate on police and education.

The member for Broadwater even had the temerity to come into the House and demand more funding for housing—the same sort of social and affordable housing that he condemned when he was a councillor on the Townsville City Council, calling social housing 'sardine city'. That shows the character of the person the backbench has put in charge of their parliamentary party. The choice for the Leader of the Opposition is that if he wants to cut payroll tax he has to cut spending. The fact that he tries to have it both ways just shows that he does not have the courage or the conviction to lead this state.

The LNP's recurring comment on these bills has been that government spending to save lives and livelihoods was somehow a mistake. While the opposition have been quick to complain, they have been far less ready to tell the people of Queensland what spending they would cut. I acknowledge the contributions from the members who highlighted the critical role that this expenditure played in supporting Queensland's recovery from COVID and natural disasters. The members for Mount Ommaney and Jordan, amongst others, passionately described the work that volunteers, businesses and community clubs are undertaking to recover from the flooding events earlier this year. Yet the LNP regards helping volunteers and flood victims as a waste of public money—no wonder, coming from the party that cut funding to community groups in this state. I will be sure to remind Queenslanders of the position that the LNP has taken on supporting hardworking volunteers to recover from flooding over the months and years to come.

I turn now to some of the remarks made by members in the debate. I note the claims made by the member for Toowoomba South and other members about coal and royalties. They have said that I am unwilling to talk about coal—nothing could be further from the truth. I have been talking up the contribution of coalmining in this state long before the opposition tried to latch onto the issue, including when I was the minister for state development supporting new coalmines at Winchester South and Olive Downs—a mine which is under construction as we meet in this House. The fact of the matter is this: I am always proud to talk about coal.

A prosperous resource sector is good for jobs and it is good for Queensland. There has never been a better time to be a coalminer in Queensland. As members opposite have acknowledged, coal prices are currently off the charts. Coal companies are selling coal for prices they have never seen before, and so their profits are boosted enormously. It is why we introduced progressive coal royalties. They have received bipartisan political support—something that the LNP conveniently ignored in this debate. Not one member of this House voted against them. The LNP went further—they voted to support them at their state conference.

Government members interjected.

Mr DICK: Can you believe it? That is because it is good policy and it is the right thing for Queensland. What I am surprised by is the shamelessness of the LNP on the issue of coal royalties in Queensland, because these royalties will help deliver the great services and infrastructure that regional Queenslanders need and deserve, like a new Moranbah Hospital. If the member for Burdekin does not like it, I will be happy to campaign with the Labor candidate for Burdekin every day up until the next election about how important that hospital is for the Burdekin electorate.

I note the comments of the member for Toowoomba South about my recent trade and investment mission where I represented the Queensland government in Korea, Japan and Singapore. The member for Toowoomba South said he did his research on my trade mission—sorry, he ran a Ctrl-F search. That is what counts for research when it comes to the LNP. There was no mention of substantive issues or investment, or anything that supports trade and investment outcomes. There was no question about what we can do to position ourselves to help support Queensland exports. It is all shortcuts for the LNP—a lazy opposition with no work ethic.

I note the comments made by the member for Everton about an alleged new payroll tax on doctors. In line with my comments in the chamber and outside of it, I advise the member that payroll tax is neither new nor targeted at doctors nor targeted at any industry or profession. The payroll tax arrangements are the same arrangements that the member for Everton presided over when he served in the cabinet of Campbell Newman—that is the sort of sloppy oversight we expect from the member for Everton.

I now turn to comments around the betting tax component of the debate. The provisions contained in this bill will help guarantee a secure future for this great industry, whether here in Brisbane or in great regional cities like Rockhampton. I know the member for Rockhampton's passion for regional racing and his support for the industry. I also note that the member for Southern Downs strongly supported sustainable funding for the racing industry. At least one of the members opposite had the courage to speak the truth. I note the contributions of the members for Hinchinbrook and Traeger on the betting tax amendment and their support for the bill. As they stated, it is important that multinational companies operating in Queensland and benefiting from Queensland racing should put something into the racing industry. I thank those members for their support of this important industry and the social and economic contribution it makes. I note the member for Toowoomba South's comment that the betting tax is a good thing for Queensland, but the member for Surfers Paradise said that this betting tax is evidence of my broken promise. The LNP supports revenue investment in the racing industry, they recognise the need for a new and sustainable funding model, they acknowledge that the revenue will be required to support the industry to ensure a fair playing field for Queensland operators, but they criticise the mechanism. Ever and always we see the opposition having it both ways and standing for nothing.

Multiple members spoke about promises made at the last election—promises that they were happy to forsake and abandon when they were in government. We often remember the LNP's cuts to services, but we also remember that that was accompanied by an LNP tax grab totalling \$3 billion. Only the LNP could tax Queenslanders more and spend less. Let us go through all the tax and revenue measures that they put through: coal royalties up \$1.64 billion in a mining downturn; insurance duty, including on the family home, up \$990 million; stamp duty up \$361 million; emergency management levy, up \$187.6 million; penalty units up \$87.5 million; gaming machine taxes up \$15.9 million; health service levy up \$22 million; and taxes on casinos up \$30.8 million. I have said it before and I will say it again and again: our party promised the people of Queensland that we would not raise their taxes, and the people of Queensland will not pay one dollar of the revenue measures I announced in the budget.

I note the comments made by the Greens political party member for South Brisbane about racing and gambling. There have always been wowsers amongst us; it is a long tradition in Australian politics. I ask this question: if the honourable member for South Brisbane is so opposed to gambling, if the member does not like racing or gambling or betting or wagering or drinking, why does the member for South Brisbane not come out and call for an outright ban? Why not have the courage of your convictions? The member for South Brisbane should be proud that she aspires to live a more moral, upstanding life than the rest of us. There are societies in the world where there is no gambling and no drinking. Personally, I do not think that is the right choice for Queensland, and I am not going to be a hypocrite about it. I do not think the people of South Brisbane would agree with that sort of world either. However, if the member for South Brisbane wants us to adopt a more austere lifestyle, if this is more than hollow virtue signalling, then let her advocate for this openly and without reservation.

I note that the policy position of the Greens political party is to phase out and ban all thoroughbred and harness racing in Queensland, but there was not one mention of banning thoroughbred racing and harness racing in this state in the contribution that the member for South Brisbane made last night—not one. She did not come in and say it should be banned. I would have more respect for members of this House if they held to their policy position in the parliament. Our government supports the racing industry and supports the rights of Queenslanders to have a punt responsibly, and we make no apology for doing so.

As mentioned earlier, I will move amendments during consideration in detail to the Betting Tax Act 2018 to ensure that betting operators are not entitled to an additional deduction for totalisator bets which are not available for other types of bets. Importantly, these further amendments will ensure equitable treatment of totalisator bets and other types of bets in relation to free bets. Additional amendments circulated in my name to be moved during consideration in detail will repeal the provisions that implement the interstate land tax measure on 1 January 2023. These amendments give effect to the Queensland government's announced position which has been well ventilated in the media and with relevant stakeholders.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: I know the opposition is upset because it voted in favour of those very provisions. Finally, I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to all who have contributed to these bills, particularly officers of the Queensland Treasury, staff of Racing Queensland and staff of the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing's department of industrial relations who supported the preparation of these bills. I think we can all agree that our public servants in this state do a great job and I want to commend them and the bills to the House.