




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

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 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (5.08 pm): I too rise to make a contribution on behalf of my electors in Southern Downs on the two budget bills in cognate. I make a point particularly with the budget bills always to emphasise the impacts and the opportunities in my own electorate of Southern Downs. I know that is my sovereign purpose as a member representing those people. When I look at the additional expenditures which are being sought on this occasion it immediately brings me to issues in my electorate which do need attention.

When I see additional funding for youth justice, police and so forth, I wonder whether the priorities are right. I do not think they are. I think that additional spending, whilst it may be necessary in detail in this case, will not do half the good that bringing back the offence of breach of bail for juvenile offenders will. When I speak about that, I think I am exercising the authentic voice of someone in the town of Goondiwindi, Warwick or other towns and cities around our state of Queensland. I speak for people like Chris and Gail Henry, who are the very hardworking proprietors of the 5 Star Supermarket in Goondiwindi, who on three occasions have had the front of their shop smashed into by a stolen vehicle. In the most recent one, like the others, tens of thousands of dollars of damage has been done, trade has been lost and stock has been stolen—although on this occasion I believe that the offenders stole lollies, chips and cigarettes, which points to the origin of this crime.

I think about Mrs Aileen Norman, who has told me on three occasions that she has had her house robbed, her keys stolen and her car taken and either burnt or placed with a growing number of abandoned and dumped vehicles in the Macintyre River. Mrs Norman is not a young lady. She lives on her own. On the most recent occasion, the keys for her car were under her pillow. She thought that at least if she did that her car would not be stolen. Sure enough, while she was asleep, they took the keys from under her pillow. You can imagine the trepidation with which Mrs Norman faces the darkness every night when she switches her light off because of the repeat youth offenders in towns like Goondiwindi who commit the same offences over and over again. There is no offence for breach of bail, so it does not matter if they go before a magistrate—just like the major-generals in Cromwell's day would say, that 'everywhere vice abounds' and the magistrates are all asleep. That is what the people in Goondiwindi tell me—that the same offenders, night after night, are doing the same thing over and over again.

I hear people opposite tell me that we need to have a budget for rehabilitation, for getting vulnerable youths out of temptation and out of the environment in which they become susceptible to becoming criminals. I agree with that but—and this is a big 'but'—those people in places like Goondiwindi and Warwick who tell me that they are sick and tired of the same offenders doing the same thing night after night and being let off over and over again are entitled to be protected from those offenders. It is simply not good enough to say that the good folk in places like Goondiwindi should have to tolerate the crime over and over again until the social causes which have given rise to it are addressed. That is effectively what Labor says. The additional funding for police and youth justice in

this budget is missing the point for people like Aileen Norman and Chris and Gail Henry in Goondiwindi. They want to see the streets safe at night. Labor has continued to fail us on that front. I see little benefit in the additional funding that the government is seeking on that point.

We see additional funding for the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. I sincerely wish that some of those funds will be used to compensate and fix the property of Mrs Lauren Goss, who is a constituent of mine in Wallangarra. I have spoken in this House before about her case and I believe I have tabled documents concerning it, but I will jog the memory of the House. Bulldozers went onto her property after the big fires in Stanthorpe about two years ago to bulldoze a fire trail. This was done at the behest of the department of environment and it became a lunar landscape. It was the most appalling abuse of an individual constituent by a government that I have seen in my time in politics. The bulldozers went in, they trampled her fruit trees, they went through fences and they cut contours which served the dams on her property which were important for her stock. It cut a swathe that could be seen from outer space up the side of her property which adjoins Girraween National Park.

Obviously, she was most concerned about this and she and I have been attempting at length to get some settlement from the Queensland government for the damage they have done to her property. We knew that when the rains came there would be a real problem, and indeed that is exactly what has happened. Her house, her domestic block on the property, was inundated because of the changes to the water flows which occurred as a result of that bulldozer activity. I think it shines a remarkable sidelight on the nature of the internal politics of the government that it was the department of environment that insisted this fire break had to be made yet it is the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services who has to deal with the carnage. I have been working on this for years and I want to see something done about it. I urge those ministers listening to have a word with the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services about this case. There is plenty of material on file and plenty of correspondence which has gone their way which will give them an indication of what needs to be done.

More broadly, I hear members opposite crowing about the unemployment rate—saying, 'We've delivered these jobs.' I have a lesson for the Labor Party here. Governments do not create jobs; the private sector does and I would say that the private sector has to a large extent done so in spite of the activities of the Labor government. You do not have to be a cafe owner or the proprietor of a caravan park to know that times have been very tough lately. The additional debt the state incurs and their proclivity for imposing extra regulation on them makes life hard for small businesses, and they are the ones who employ people.

It is small business in this state and this country which employ the majority of people. People who work hard and invest their savings go into debt to create a business, to employ themselves, to make a living for themselves, to employ people so they can have a living as well—so that all concerned can pay taxes which pay for politicians, police, hospitals and so forth. I think it is disingenuous for the Labor Party, with their regressive economic policies, to constantly come into this House and claim credit for any increase in the amount of employment in our state.

I heard members of the House talk about housing. We need to remember that it is the actions of the government which have made the business of investing in rental properties less attractive. If you talk to any real estate agent in an area where there are lots of rental properties, they will tell you that their rental rolls have seen an exodus of good people who no longer want to rent their property because the scales have been tipped too far in favour of tenants—because tenants are now allowed to make alterations to the property, they can bring in pets and they cannot be asked to leave at the end of a lease. Members opposite know that these are the effects of interventions on the rental market which make the business of renting a house too risky for people to want to do. As a result, we do not have enough houses in the housing market right now to house everyone. To hear that the government is blaming the federal government for that is totally disingenuous.

I heard the Treasurer talk about Fitzgerald. I think it is very unfortunate that the government, which has had such alarming revelations about its absence of integrity in recent months, should be bringing that name into this House. By brandishing the Fitzgerald report in this House, I believe the Treasurer has disrespected the legacy of Fitzgerald. I am quite a student of that particular report, and I can say that there are many instances in that report which point to the behaviours of this current government now—activities which shield from public scrutiny wrongdoing, which politicise the Public Service and which deny Queenslanders who pay for the government information about what has been going on. I urge members opposite to leave out talking about the Fitzgerald inquiry and the Fitzgerald report because at the moment they are not living up to the standards that Commissioner Fitzgerald had put down.

I will say one last thing and it is about the debt. I heard the member for Nanango speak in very good terms before about the \$4 billion debt we were supposed to have before the 2020 election and then the \$28 billion debt that emerged afterwards.

Mr Krause: Increase in debt.

Mr LISTER: This is the increase in debt. I take the interjection from my honourable friend the member for Scenic Rim. He is a very clever fellow. That debt is a millstone around the neck of every Queenslander. It is going to mean that there will be over \$100 billion of debt and climbing to keep the lights on imposed upon my kids, my grandkids and their grandkids. It is wrong to leave a poorer standard of living to your successor generation.