



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (2.33 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate debate of the appropriation bills and the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I am a member of the Economics and Governance Committee that inquired into the two appropriation bills last month. I thank the department for the briefing provided to members. The appropriation bills authorise the unforeseen expenditure from consolidated funds above the amount previously approved by the parliament. The amount previously approved by this House for the financial year starting 1 July 2021 was just over \$63.5 billion. The amount of unforeseen expenditure we are here to authorise, through these bills, for that financial year is just over \$2.8 billion.

The three biggest departments accounting for the unforeseen expenditure are the Department of Environment and Science, Queensland Treasury and the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. The Department of Environment and Science spend is primarily due to advance payments to local councils with respect to the waste disposal levy. These advance payments were delivered to councils to help offset COVID expenses and shortfalls experienced by councils across Queensland during the pandemic. Queensland Treasury's unforeseen expenditure included the provision of the Australian government's HomeBuilder grant, increased First Home Owner Grants and payments against the Queensland Government Insurance Fund. The Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning expenditure was due to the allocation of money to the Building Acceleration Fund, the on-forwarding of the federal government's Financial Assistance Grants to local governments and costs incurred by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to cover reconstruction costs arising from the flooding across Queensland in 2021-22.

As we can see if we look at the bulk of expenses across other departments, these spends were incurred by a government and departments to stimulate the economy during a pandemic and in response to the double whammy of natural disasters. I note that the statement of reservation refers to these expenses as 'wasteful spending' and the result of a government that 'no longer values Queenslanders' money the way it should'. Allow me to retort. This is the same opposition that called on the government to do more and spend more during the pandemic. They felt that our economic stimulus packages, whether to businesses, councils or individuals, were not enough. 'More', they said. 'Do more', the opposition said. And so we did. This is the statement of reservation we get when we spend. They say it is wasteful and shows no respect for Queenslanders' money. Let us look at the result of this spending and compare it to other jurisdictions.

The Queensland economy is powering ahead following our world-leading response to COVID-19 and not just in a health sense but also, clearly, in an economic sense.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mrs McMAHON: I take the interjection because the Morrison government should have been responsible for immigration during the pandemic but, no! It was left to the states to shoulder the burden of looking after people coming through international borders during the pandemic because the Morrison government was left wanting. The Queensland government and Queensland taxpayers had to pick up the cost when the Morrison government failed and was negligent in its constitutional duties.

We were and are the best-performing mainland state with respect to the economy. Our state is attracting people from every other state. We have clearly managed this right and people are voting with their feet. We can compare our performance to that of New South Wales. 'Botched' is the best way to describe their performance with lockdowns long after the horse had bolted. They lost weeks and months to lockdowns. New South Wales's unforeseen expenditure during the corresponding period is \$17.8 billion and ours is \$2.8 billion. The New South Wales economy and population is not six times the size of Queensland so either Queensland has done exceptionally well or New South Wales has done atrociously. Why not have both?

We make no apologies for supporting the Queensland economy and Queenslanders through the pandemic and in times of natural disaster. When the private sector recoils and retracts in those times, it is the role of government to step up and step in to stimulate the economy and we make no apologies for doing so. The recovery results speak for themselves, particularly when we compare them to those of New South Wales. We responded. We brought forward the spending of hundreds of millions of dollars for Bruce Highway upgrades. We stimulated local council infrastructure projects in communities across Queensland. I did not hear those opposite complain about those unforeseen expenditures in their electorates. Those opposite now claim that spending for grants and recovery assistance is wasteful and not respectful of Queenslanders' money. I would say that there is nothing more Queensland than reaching out and helping other Queenslanders in their time of need, whether it be in a pandemic or natural disaster.

I turn to the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. At the outset I admit that I am not a punter. I have not been to a race day since Easter in the Country 1992. I did not know how to place a bet then and I still do not. My exposure to Melbourne Cup Day is really limited to the \$2 sweep. I confess that it is just not my bag. What does interest me in this bill is the mechanism by which large multinational often offshore companies that profit from the Queensland racing industry will be required to contribute to the funding of country thoroughbred race meetings. Companies that make billions of dollars worldwide should be making contributions when they are established overseas and are largely out of taxation reach. Particularly where they generate money from Queenslanders, that money should be going back into the Queensland racing industry, particularly in relation to the facilities at our country racecourses.

I note that female jockeys account for the biggest increase in apprentice jockeys in Queensland. We need to invest in our country racing facilities to ensure they have appropriate facilities. We want to encourage our female apprentice jockeys. We need to make sure they have appropriate facilities. This is a fantastic mechanism to ensure the facilities in the Queensland racing industry are properly maintained and funded.

Something contained in this particular bill that is of interest to me are the amendments to payroll tax. The Revenue Legislation Amendment Act has already considered the requirements legislatively to implement the mental health levy. During consideration of that legislation it was foreshadowed that additional amendments to the Payroll Tax Act would be required to implement administrative, machinery and transitional arrangements for this levy. The levy will apply to employers or organisations with Australia-wide wages exceeding \$10 million per annum and a higher rate where wages exceed \$100 million per annum.

This levy will affect only the top one per cent of Queensland businesses—businesses such as Coles, Woolworths, Wesfarmers and Telstra, businesses that benefited and profited handsomely during the pandemic such as Harvey Norman and Best & Less. During that same pandemic the mental health of millions of Queenslanders went backwards. I refer to the findings of the Australian Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health. It stated that improving and investing in the mental health system will provide an annual benefit of \$1.3 billion in economic participation alone. While the top one per cent of companies will contribute directly by funding mental health services through this levy, they are also directly in line to reap the benefits of increased economic participation. Queenslanders will benefit from the money generated by this mental health levy—\$183 million in the first year of implementation and a dedicated funding stream for mental health, alcohol and other drug services.

Over lunch I met with some of our local Logan mental health service providers—Lives Lived Well—who have a fantastic facility out at Logan House in the Logan electorate. They have one of the few residential addiction services in Queensland. That is, a family with their children can live in while

they receive the addiction services they require in a holistic environment. As we on the Mental Health Select Committee discovered, we need more of them. We do not have enough detox beds in Queensland. We do not have enough residential beds in Queensland. Initiatives such as the mental health levy will pay for these things. That is why I commend this bill to the House.