




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 2)

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (11.51 am): I rise to make a small contribution to the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) 2021 and the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2021. As has been said on this side of the chamber, we will not be opposing these bills. By way of quick history, on 15 September last year the Treasurer introduced the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) and the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2) into the Legislative Assembly. We are debating these bills in cognate. They were referred to the Economics and Governance Committee for joint consideration, and the committee reported back on 1 November last year.

Before I go into detail with my contribution, I cannot help but at least put to the chamber today that I have played back a couple of times to different branch meetings that section of consideration in detail when the Treasurer got up late last year to try to unsuccessfully explain how to capitalise income. It pertained to the valuation of the state titles office. It was an absolute masterclass in how to not explain a concept which anyone who goes to an introductory business finance subject at QUT would learn pretty much in the third week of study.

It was absolutely staggering that we had the Treasurer of this state who was unable to disclose what a discount rate was. In fact, moreover, I do not know respectfully whether the member for Woodridge, the Treasurer, even understood what a discount rate was to capitalise an income stream. It is no wonder that yet again we have another unforeseen expenditure bill. I will highlight a concept that the member for Woodridge, the Treasurer, might also fail to grasp—that is, opportunity cost: what could have been done elsewhere. I will come to that a little bit later in my contribution.

I note that under this bill the Treasurer is authorised to pay just under half a billion dollars—\$447 million—from the Consolidated Fund, and that is for six different departments as stated for the financial year starting back on 1 July 2020. Queensland Treasury have provided the following amounts to the committee on unforeseen expenditure broken down by department: the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, \$188.9 million; the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, \$114.2 million; Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, \$91.1 million; the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, \$28.9 million; the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, \$52.845 million; and the Queensland Police Service, just under \$10 million at \$9.8 million.

Under the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill (No. 2), the Treasurer is authorised to pay \$1.795 million from the Consolidated Fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial year starting 1 July 2020. This unforeseen expenditure occurred by the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service was advised by the Treasurer to be for the running of the election during the pandemic. At the end of the day, it probably is a case of the old famous quote attributed to

Benjamin Disraeli—'lies, lies and damn statistics'—because we have seen opponents on the other side of the chamber cherry-pick certain key economic indices to further their argument. In the interests of a robust democracy, I will do likewise and tell another side of the tale.

Let us look at the key performance indicators for Queensland in the latest CommSec State of the States report. It is ironic that the member for Woodridge, the Treasurer, likes to cherry-pick when documentation from third-party organisations is admissible or not. There is a pretty easy index for that: does it support his argument or not? If the data does not support his particular argument then I guess you can wipe the basis of where that data comes from. Successive governments have used the State of the States report year after year. I find it galling that when there is a data set that you do not agree with you simply throw it out with the bathwater. No. We are not going to fall for that.

The fact of the matter is that, when you look at the State of the States report, Queensland is ranked fifth of eight jurisdictions—to be specific, fifth of six states—for overall economic performance full stop. At the end of the day—I will be fair with my comments here—the Treasurer can actually use what has occurred with this great state in the last two years with the insidiously evil COVID-19 virus. I again find it galling that members on the other side of the chamber want to be a bit loose with the truth as it pertains to who has really done the heavy lifting to get this state out of some of the mess and, more importantly, the future predicament that it faces.

I agree with the member for Greenslopes when he outlined lines stretching street after street after street. Whilst I disagree vehemently with a lot of his ideology, I find the member for Greenslopes to be fair minded. I think he would concur with this situation when I say that what he identified happening in his electorate could be repeated electorate after electorate throughout the state.

What really concerns me is the fact that the state government has spent or did spend around \$8.8 billion on COVID stimulus but again, in the interests of being fair, that is less than a third of what the federal government invested in Queensland of just shy of \$28 billion. If we are going to be fair dinkum in this chamber and we want to have a robust debate, we also have to make sure that when we stand at our respective lecterns we use our words to show both sides to try to make sure that we have some degree of balance.

The simple fact of the matter is this: pretty much no western democracy invoked Keynesian economic theory 101. There was virtually little choice. What concerns me is the fact that we have the situation now where money is being spent to literally keep the lights on in this great state. There is nothing wrong with debt. Too many politicians are spooked to get up and publicly say that debt is bad. Debt is not bad. Debt is not bad at all. It depends on how that debt is used. If you are using it to borrow to produce income-producing assets—big tick—there is nothing wrong with that. We are actually borrowing money because of a lack of ministerial performance in relation to keeping watch of their particular departments.

When we are borrowing money, particularly over the four-year forwards—those are not my words; they are in the budget papers—we are going to hit peak debt, including government-owned corporations, of \$130 billion. What is absolutely—for the third time—galling is the fact that we have a series on portfolio-by-portfolio scorecards, and when we look at the sad capital expenditure it is lacking.

I will now close by referring to the transport and main roads portfolio. We have a \$300 million blowout with Gold Coast Light Rail stage 3. We have about a \$630 million blowout as it relates to the Coomera Connector. I actually heard with dismay this morning only two hours ago the member for Miller, the transport and main roads minister, yet again refer to the '\$5.4 billion' Cross River Rail project. Nice try, member for Miller. Nice try, Minister for Transport and Main Roads. When it comes to credibility and integrity, there is going to be one word attributed to the member for Miller. When inevitably, like all of us, the sun sets on his political career one way or the other, people will know in one word the legacy of the member for Miller, the transport and main roads minister. The one word that will forever be attributable to that particular member is: mangocube.