




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; STATE FINANCIAL
INSTRUCTIONS AND METWAY MERGER AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (12.26 pm): The fundamental test of this budget was whether it would be an election budget for the next four months or a budget for Queensland's future for the next four years and beyond. It is an obvious question, and this decade-old government has answered it clearly: it is all about the election. Phrases from respected commentators from across the nation have summed it up: 'Ekka stuffing vote-grabbing show bags', 'gaudy maroon sign, spruiking massive discounts' and simply 'clown show'. Queenslanders need cost-of-living support because of the Miles government's failure to plan for the long term—to address the housing, crime, health, power and infrastructure challenges that have pushed up cost-of-living pressures in Queensland for the last decade.

Never has a Queensland government taxed more, borrowed more or spent more, but everywhere we look—every service delivery arm and every household—there is less, sometimes nothing, to show for it. This decade-old government has taxed more than any government in Queensland history—a Treasurer personally responsible for new taxes when he promised 26 times there would be none. He has damaged our national and international standing as an investment safe harbour. He has shown contempt for an industry that underpins our economy and our trading partners who have stood with us for decades. He has casually delivered unpredictable and inconsistent decisions impacting the property industry and worsening our housing crisis, in particular pushing up the cost of rent.

This decade-old government has borrowed more than any government in Queensland history. The debt bomb has not just landed in this budget; it has been a decade in the making. The Miles government inherited the treasury benches with \$72 billion debt and now, a decade later, it is \$172 billion. Ten budgets and \$100 billion more—and most of that debt is not even COVID related.

At the same time, they were blessed with revenue rivers of gold. It is scarcely believable that this Treasurer has collected nearly \$70 billion more revenue than he forecast in his first budget less than four years ago. Where has it all gone? There is record debt, record taxes and record spending, but all we have is record numbers of Queensland patients on the ramp, record numbers of Queenslanders sleeping in their tents or in cars, and record numbers of victims of crime living with the psychological and physical scars of our crime crisis.

To add insult to injury, Queensland's interest bill by the end of the forwards will be \$7.73 billion per annum. That is the bill that has to be paid before the year even begins—before anything can even be funded. That is \$21 million per day in interest alone. The interest bill by the end of the forwards is equivalent to funding six new hospitals today. It is equivalent to fully funding the Queensland Police Service today, twice over, every year and it is equivalent to funding the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works three times over, right now, this year.

This decade-old government has spent more than any other government in Queensland history. Sir Leo Hielscher, the most respected public servant Queensland has ever produced—the man whose hands figuratively built Queensland—has often said to me that the task of any treasurer is to control the spending of his or her colleagues around the cabinet table. We will return that control if we are given the gift of government at the end of the year. Infrastructure projects will be delivered on time and on budget. If there are cost overruns, there will be transparency as to why and how much. If there are delays, there will be transparency as to why and when they will be completed. The Cabinet Budget Review Committee will mean something. Look at the Wellcamp quarantine facility—\$223 million down the gurgler for a political tantrum; \$126,000 on a minister travelling to art galleries; and tens of thousands of dollars spent by the Premier and minister to fly two separate aeroplanes to the same location 15 minutes apart. That has all been signed off by the Treasurer—every last dollar.

Spending must deliver tangible outcomes and that is why we are setting targets across portfolios to improve service delivery and to ensure ministers can be held to account. State investment in the private sector must produce an economic dividend that is in the best interests of all Queenslanders. Even PsiQuantum must meet that test. We have promised scrutiny of the budget, and we have delivered. We have committed to savings from consultants and contractors. As the Leader of the Opposition has just announced, we will not be proceeding with the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro project.

For nearly four years, I have travelled the state listening to Queenslanders. From these thousands of conversations, I have announced a reshaping of Queensland's economic architecture. As the leader has discussed, the restoration of a Queensland Productivity Commission is a key plank of our economic platform. Governments play a fundamental role in the productivity challenge as they tax, regulate and spend. Earlier this year, the federal Productivity Commission released its five-year review of Australia's productivity. It was a nine-volume 1,000-page document crying out for public policy improvements. Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers has talked about an opportunity to renew the federal Productivity Commission and past Labor luminaries Hawke and Keating shaped their agendas on Productivity Commission recommendations.

Meanwhile, in Queensland, this Labor Treasurer abolished our Productivity Commission. It must be restored and, if fortunate to form government, it will be the first piece of legislation I bring into the parliament, but there is more: Queensland has been left with generational debt, without a generational outcome. It is one of the reasons we have announced Queensland's first intergenerational equity report. We have announced Queensland's first parliamentary budget office to return integrity and transparency to the budget process and we have announced the creation of an office of social impact within Treasury that will administer our social entrepreneur's fund every year to the tune of \$20 million. Social entrepreneurs, not-for-profits and community organisations are embedded in the Queensland community and they are ready to deliver for Queensland. They have the knowledge, the heart and the drive to help change the world around them. I have seen this with my own eyes as a founding director of Vanguard Laundry, a large-scale jobs-focused social enterprise for people who face long-term barriers to rejoining the workforce.

Today we have announced a significant housing package that has been carefully calibrated towards boosting supply. It is time to raise Queensland's rate of home ownership—currently the lowest in the nation—offer hope to young people and start to build intergenerational prosperity. For the Labor government, changing stamp duty for home owners was a political ploy for the papers. For us, it is in our DNA—aspiration, a piece of the dream, opportunity, hope and self-empowerment. When I became Australia's first shadow minister for home ownership, we outlined three priority areas—supply, tax relief and incentives.

Today we announce that an LNP government will completely abolish first buyer stamp duty on new dwellings and on vacant land to build a home for owner occupation. This will be the biggest boost ever to young Queenslanders' home ownership dreams. The threshold for \$700,000 will apply for existing properties, but for new homes it will be completely stamp duty free. These initiatives mean that under an LNP government, 14,000 more young Queenslanders will achieve home ownership every year. An LNP government will also make it easier for Queenslanders to access both the stamp duty concession and the first home owner grant. Currently there are restrictions on both of these when it comes to renting out one or more spare rooms in the first 12 months of ownership. Under an LNP government, these restrictions on first home buyers will be abolished. Not only will this provide greater opportunity for first home buyers but also it will instantly increase the supply of rental accommodation.

An LNP government will introduce our own standalone shared equity program for Queenslanders. Other states like Western Australia have run theirs successfully for a long time, whereas this Labor government has only done it when forced by the federal Labor government to adopt their plan. Put simply, the federal scheme is a start, but our program will be fit for the current market

environment and we look forward to reducing the deposit gap for 1,000 applicants without access to the bank of mum and dad or other means. The government has only focused on demand-side policies, but we will bring strategic, supply-side solutions in a consistent and appropriate manner by: working with councils to ensure they have the infrastructure funds to meet local council demands; working with the private sector to unlock land to market; and working with organisations that have available land to provide affordable housing. These are all supply-side solutions.

I confirm that the opposition will not oppose the State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Amendment Bill 2024 that is part of this cognate debate. Financial institutions rise and fall, brands change and companies merge. None of it grabs much public attention outside of the financial services ecosystem, except when it comes to Suncorp. Suncorp has been Queensland's financial services flagship. It is as Queensland as mangoes and macadamias. Even its brand is a blazing Queensland sun, and that is what makes the \$4.9 billion ANZ buyout of the Suncorp bank politically significant. The State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Act 1996 laid down strict technical requirements. The act has glued Queensland residents, function and headquarter requirements to the Suncorp Metway banking entity and its holding company, Suncorp Group Ltd. Labor opposed the merger which former premier, Rob Borbidge, and treasurer, Joan Sheldon, have both personally said to me is their greatest political achievement in government. Ironically, the then opposition leader, Peter Beattie, opposed the merger, railing about the day when the head office is based in New York or Melbourne. Quite prescient, really, given ANZ's location. It is often forgotten that at the height of the global financial crisis, ANZ nearly bought Suncorp. Suncorp had substantial bad debts in its bank and was still swallowing its \$7.9 billion insurance buy, Promina, which owned AAMI and several other brands.

On Friday, 10 October 2008, ANZ put a \$3.4 billion takeover offer on the table for Suncorp's banking and wealth management business. The offer would lapse on the Sunday night. That same Friday, 10 October, I sat in Heritage Bank's boardroom with my CEO and key executives. We were a \$7 billion business at the time and were customer owned and community focused. We had driven our asset growth primarily through securitisation and were seeing rising pressure from the international providers of our warehouse facilities.

That pressure, together with significant deposit outflows as worried customers withdraw their funds, brought us together around the boardroom table that Friday afternoon. Forget politics: that was real, professional heat in the firestorm of the global financial crisis and I have never, ever forgotten the lessons learnt there during that time. Meanwhile, Suncorp was considering the \$3.4 billion ANZ offer all that weekend. With the looming Sunday night deadline approaching, then prime minister Rudd and treasurer Swan announced a government guarantee on retail deposits and wholesale debt at 2 pm on the Sunday. Suncorp had a bank guarantee from the federal government that no amount of money could have bought.

It is time for Queensland to have a government that is laser focused on the right priorities. If we are fortunate to form government, we will provide opportunity, certainty and stability. This Treasurer treats taxpayer dollars as a political wedge rather than with respect. We will bring accountability back for taxpayers and end the waste—no more opaque or speculative investments. Earlier in this term the Treasurer introduced the Debt Reduction and Savings Bill. It was laughable at that time—we on this side of the House knew it—and it is even more so today. It is time for Queenslanders to have the very best because they deserve it—the best health care, the best schools, the most engaged police force, the safest communities and the highest rate of home ownership. All that is nothing short of what Queenslanders deserve as citizens of the greatest state in the greatest country of all.