




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (5.15 pm): I was glad I popped into the House a little earlier than I was scheduled to and heard the contribution of the member for Bancroft, who let the cat out of the bag for his command-style operations when he said that he wanted to talk about ruling in Queensland. That is the Labor way. They want to rule Queensland. They want to tell you what to do and how to think and how to spend your money. They do not want to govern; they want to rule. That is the way the commissars in the ALP think.

Then I was happy to hear the contribution of the member for South Brisbane, because out of the mouth of the member for South Brisbane came the truth: Labor has adopted the Greens policy. Labor and the Greens are in bed together to deny Queenslanders the rights and the opportunities they want. Whether it is jacking up taxes and fees and charges as much as they possibly can until they get caught out—we heard it from the member for South Brisbane. We heard what their game is. They are coming after the Labor members. They see their voter base as interchangeable, and we know that that is what Labor is worried about. It was, indeed, fun to be here and to hear the truth come out from a couple of speakers.

This is the 10th budget of this decade-old, chaotic and crisis-ridden Labor government—a government that has never taxed more, spent more and left Queenslanders with so little to show for it. While the Premier and the Treasurer desperately pretend that this is a new government, Queenslanders know the reality is far different. While the Treasurer desperately tries to airbrush the past out of his resume, that past is a stain too dark to be painted out. Here is the question the Treasurer did not dare answer in his budget speech: if he is so proud of his previous budgets and the Labor government's achievements, why is he so desperate to avoid mentioning either them or the former premier? This budget is the culmination of nearly a decade of Labor policy and administration failures. It is the end result of more failed plans than the commissars of the USSR ever tried to implement. Queenslanders can see Labor's re-election desperation evident in a budget spendathon: the desperation of a tired, 10-year-old government abandoning all fiscal rectitude in an effort to spend its way to an election victory.

We have had a decade of fiscal and policy failure. Who remembers the now abandoned debt management trust of the 2015 election—a trust that bit the dust? It was going to quarantine 66 per cent of GOC dividends. It was a bit like the Bruce Highway trust that disappeared—a bit like the plan to fix the Bruce Highway itself. Members will remember that this Labor government stopped paying superannuation contributions into public servants' superannuation funds for five years. It was Labor that then raided the Public Service long service leave entitlements in 2015. It was Labor that ripped \$10 billion out of government owned corporations and forced them to borrow billions in order to pay that money to the government, something that in the private sector you would be prosecuted for. Then there was Labor's \$4 billion raid on public servants' superannuation funds in 2016. Not only did they stop making payments to it but they also raided the superannuation funds and took \$4 billion out.

Then there was the massive hoax of the transfer of the titles office and the now barely mentioned Debt Retirement Fund in the Queensland Future Fund and the subsequent borrowings against that fund of \$2.1 billion, supposedly to improve liquidity. How is that Debt Retirement Fund going? The budget papers bell the cat on that failed plan. Every year from 2023 onwards shows both net and gross debt increasing—every single year. There is not much debt retirement going on there. It was another sleight of hand that was, as always under Labor, proving to be ephemeral and of no lasting value.

Then there were the billions more in borrowings under the Trad treasury years. We have had Treasurer Dick's infamous 26 broken promises not to increase taxes. He has tried to airbrush that out of his history as well. For anyone remotely interested, you can catch the entire episode in last week's edition of 'Chooks'. They even have the video of that broken promise. What were the words? 'No new taxes from the Labor government if we are re-elected.' That applied to businesses and individuals.

This 10-year-old Labor government has never fronted up to the real structural problems of Queensland's finances. It relies on financial trickery and chicanery each and every year, and this year is no different. The forwards predict a return to surplus through a magical \$3 billion cost control program—something that Labor has never been able to achieve in all its time in this place—with no detail and no realistic expectation, just a line item in the budget.

It does not matter if it is Premier Miles or Palaszczuk, Treasurer Trad or Dick: the tricks and failures are the same because it is the same tired, 10-year-old, chaotic Labor government. The member for Bulimba, who obviously did not get the memo or read or listen to the Treasurer's speech, knows this. Only yesterday she said that, despite everything, past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. The member for Bulimba was exactly right. Past behaviour is exactly the predictor of the future behaviour of this Labor government. All of the accused are still in the dock over there. They are still sitting on the government front bench. They all supported the failures that are now coming home to roost—each and every one of them.

This is a big-taxing and big-spending budget purely because it has to be. The cost-of-living crisis that Labor has ignored for far too long, and in some cases through its failed policies has actually exacerbated, necessitates spending and taxing on a scale that is almost without precedent in this state. While Queenslanders will no doubt accept the rebates, the fee relief and the grants programs with alacrity, they will also do so with two big questions in their collective minds: how long will they be available and will they continue to be necessary? Those are the two key issues raised with me by members of my community and more broadly in my travels.

Plenty of people treat these programs as nothing more than a cynical vote-buying exercise by a desperate decade-old government that has run out of ideas and is desperate to win another term. They ask: if Labor has managed the economy and finances so well, why is it necessary to have massive electricity rebates? Others say: whatever happened to the federal Labor promise of reducing everyone's powers bills by \$275, made only two years ago? The sad reality is that in some jurisdictions prices have increased by up to \$773 and here in Queensland we have seen a 19 per cent surge in prices under this Labor government.

If the transition to renewables was meant to not only save the planet but also save consumers from paying more, why did this decade-old Labor government rush a bill through this place in the last sitting week to provide electricity rebates and what happens when those rebates expire? Are power bills going to miraculously drop after 30 June next year? Will Callide C be up and operating at full speed again, or is the fantasy of the uncosted, unapproved and already over budget Pioneer-Burdekin hydro scheme proposed by this government going to save the day? Queenslanders know that it is not.

Many reasonable people question why this government continues to turn its back on some of the cheapest and most reliable forms of existing base-load power in Queensland, and that is black coal mine-mouth fired generation. Those installed, operating and paid-for generators have many years of life in them if they are properly maintained. We have some of the youngest generating fleet in the country. We are consistently told by the minister for energy that we have the youngest fleet in the country and he wants to keep them running but will not pay for the maintenance bill to do so. We all saw what happened at Callide C when you do not fund maintenance. When you rip the money out of the GOCs they break down. Just like a family car, generators have to have the proper maintenance to get the best out of them and just like a car when you skimp on maintenance it starts failing.

A government member interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Who said that? Was that the member for Sandgate?

Mr Hinchliffe: No.

Mr NICHOLLS: Was it the member for Bancroft who talked about failing? When we talk about failing, let us talk about the Redcliffe 'rail fail'.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Order! Members, that quarrelling was getting to be too much. Member for Sandgate, if it continues you will be warned. Member for Clayfield, of course it would be helpful if you were not as provocative.

Mr NICHOLLS: Almost three years after we were promised it would be up and running again, Callide is still not running at full capacity. Only in the last fortnight we have seen allegations in the Federal Court of power price manipulation by the state owned generation companies, which disturbingly, if true, show the generators were not being operated in the best interests of Queensland consumers. These are substantial issues that this government does not and cannot answer.

In the meantime, power bills for Queensland families and businesses will continue to escalate. We see the impacts of this every day. In my electorate, businesses that have been around for decades are closing. Mica Brasserie at Breakfast Creek has closed and King Street Bakery, run by award-winning chef Shannon Kellam, has gone into liquidation. Brewbakers at Albion, one of Brisbane's famous sourdough bakeries, has closed. Every day we read of restaurants closing and builders going to the wall. Costs are too high, customers are cutting back and nothing in the budget will bring back those businesses. They are gone and the jobs they provided are gone.

Housing is under threat because of the failures of this Labor government. There is too much red tape, approvals take too long and can be uncertain and affordable land is unavailable. The transactional costs of buying a house make entry into the market a challenge for Queenslanders, and none is greater than stamp duty. That is why the opposition leader's speech outlining the LNP's pledge of no stamp duty for new home buyers who buy new build housing or vacant land-and-house packages is so important. That pledge goes directly to the heart of the great Australian dream of owning your own home. The great Australian dream is not of moving into government owned accommodation, which might be necessary but is not sufficient; nor is it of renting forever. Renting is often a step along the way, but for many it is not the end; ownership is that end.

Hopefully, we all know what it is like to find your own place. Nothing can replace the feeling of picking up the keys to the front door of your very own house and making it your home. You found it, you bought it and you own it. That piece of land is yours. You can literally tell the world to 'nick off' once you walk in the front gate. That is what this tired 10-year-old lefty Labor government does not get: aspiration for our kids and their kids; getting a foot on the ladder; starting modestly, get bigger if you want or stay there forever—it does not matter because it is yours.

The LNP's policy reaches deep inside the very core of what it means to be an Australian and it answers that need. Only the LNP can deliver it because the LNP believe in private ownership, we believe in personal responsibility and we believe in the dreams and aspirations of every young Queenslanders who chooses to own their own home. It is that simple. This policy is about the long term. It is not just a sugar hit for six months; it is a solid foundation that reforms stamp duty and lets people invest in themselves just by getting government out of the way.

In the very short period left to me I want to mention a few things relating to the electorate of Clayfield. There has been a total failure by this decade-old Labor government to honour its promises to the people of Clayfield. In 2017 the former transport minister promised us that we would see the Albion Railway Station supersized and made disability compliant. Seven years later we are still waiting. There is a paltry \$1 million out of a cost of \$16.8 million. At this rate it will take another nine years, by which time all of the standards will have changed and they will have to start again. In 2020 the former transport minister made the same promise for the Woolloowin station. Guess what? We are still waiting!

I can see no money in the capital statement for a new concert hall for Kedron State High School. Indeed, there is no funding for any new facilities at any school in the Clayfield electorate.

There is no funding for upgrades to the Eagle Farm racecourse, so there will not be much love for the racing minister on Stradbroke Day this Saturday. I can tell members that for free. There is no funding for capital improvement for the Kedron State High School concert hall for which they have been patiently waiting 10 years under Labor.

Never has a government taxed more, spent more and delivered so little for the people of Clayfield. It is no wonder the Treasurer does not want Queenslanders to make a judgement on Labor's decades of failure, because the only judgement would be that this Labor government is guilty of failing—failing Queenslanders and failing the residents of Clayfield. This budget again highlights the decade of failures that should encourage everyone in Queensland on 26 October to show Labor the door in 2024.