




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (6.04 pm): Things cannot be going so well over there in the new LNP government if the Treasurer is already talking about what the next Labor government will be doing. After the first 100 days we have seen from those opposite, it might be sooner than we think.

When it comes to home ownership, we on this side of the House absolutely believe it should be in reach for hardworking Queenslanders, but right now that dream is slipping further away, especially for those young people who do not have the so-called bank of mum and dad. House prices keep climbing, yet wages are not keeping pace. Saving for a deposit is tough enough, but even those who manage to get there are left struggling with mortgages they can barely afford. This is not what we want to see in Queensland and it is why Labor will always fight to break down barriers to home ownership and ease the cost of entering the housing market for young Queenslanders.

The Labor opposition will always support attempts to improve housing supply in Queensland. However, we do share the same concerns as many stakeholders that the impact of the measures in this bill will be limited. Of course, it would be remiss of me whilst talking of home ownership not to mention the news today that the Reserve Bank has made a determination to cut the cash rate to 4.1 per cent. As Treasurer Jim Chalmers has said, this is rate relief that Australia needs and Australians deserve. Federal Labor has demonstrated the progress we have made on inflation, and each of the four major banks have already indicated that the benefits of this rate cut will be passed on in full, so that is very good news for Queenslanders.

When it comes to the stamp duty aspect of this bill, we note it was a key election commitment for the government. Whilst the Labor opposition will support the legislation, it would be remiss of me not to raise our concerns for its ability to achieve its intended outcome. The Real Estate Institute of Queensland has raised red flags stating that there is a lack of data on first home buyers purchasing new properties or vacant land in Queensland. Their submission to the Queensland committee stated—

There is, however, a lack of data available on first home buyer's purchases of new properties or vacant land in Queensland.

The REIQ would be interested to understand if the Government has modelling in relation to the expected take up of the new concessions and anticipated increase in the rate of homeownership in Queensland.

In our view, the use of the new concessions may be limited ...

Queensland Treasury confirmed in the committee hearings that they had not done the work—no modelling, no real evidence to show that this measure will move the dial at all for Queenslanders looking to buy their first home. I note in the Treasurer's contribution to the debate he talked about estimates, but it was clear from the evidence given to the committee by Queensland Treasury that no modelling has been done.

Labor's concern is that this policy will benefit those buying multimillion dollar properties—buyers who, let us be honest, do not need a tax cut. Someone buying a \$2 million property would receive nearly six times as much in first home tax support as a first home buyer purchasing a median property in

Bundaberg. To drive real change for prospective first home buyers, measures should be targeted, but let us be honest: completely removing the property value threshold for first home buyers is not a targeted approach. This is why the former Labor government took a targeted approach to stamp duty exemptions. We raised the first home concession threshold from \$550,000 to \$800,000 in the middle of last year to ensure we were inclusive in the face of rising property costs, whilst also targeting the demographic of first home buyers who needed support. We did the same thing with the first home vacant land concession and were prepared to review the property tax setting post October if re-elected. We listened to the Property Council's call to undertake this review, despite this being something the Treasurer would not commit to.

The next part of the bill allows for first home concession recipients to partially rent out their properties without losing their concession. The Labor opposition supports the removal of that requirement—so much so that it was actually already delivered by the previous Miles Labor government. Labor has always been supportive of removing barriers for first home buyers and ensuring we support renters throughout the state as well. We did in government and we will continue to do so in opposition.

It is interesting to see the LNP government act as though this is anything other than a minor change in legislation. However, if the LNP are interested in taking a page out of our book, the advice is that they must make it clear to first home concession recipients that they may be impacted by federal taxation such as capital gains tax. This was also noted by stakeholders during the committee hearing. The Housing Industry Association has suggested that this is likely to have little impact on improving housing conditions in the state. Much more is needed to ensure every Queenslanders has a roof over their head, and it is time for the government to step up and take action to ensure this.

The opposition has always supported exempting GPs from payroll tax. On 19 September 2023, the Queensland Revenue Office issued a revised payroll tax ruling in relation to medical centres. Essentially, the ruling meant that under normal business arrangements where patient fees are paid directly by a patient or Medicare to a general practitioner for that practitioner's services, it will not be subject to payroll tax. That includes the Medicare benefit and any out-of-pocket expenses. The LNP's scare campaign that patients will be paying more was completely unfounded. In fact, the Commissioner of State Revenue made it clear during committee hearings that the GP payroll tax amnesty had already been accounted for in the government's own forecasts. Why? Because the previous Labor government had already fixed the issue. The truth is that this bill will not fix anything, simply because the problem itself was manufactured by those on the other side so they could pretend to solve it.

The measures taken by the former Miles Labor government to ensure GPs were not subject to payroll tax were welcomed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, which actually encouraged other states to follow Queensland's lead. The reality is that Labor, both in government and now in opposition, has always prioritised our state's health workers. We recognise the important contribution they make to our communities and how much they sacrifice just to do their jobs to care for us every day. Under Labor, we delivered the biggest health budget in Queensland's history, investing in more hospitals, more frontline staff and more services, and that is the difference between us on this side of the room and those opposite. Labor backs health care with action, while the LNP plays politics with people's wellbeing.

It is obscene for the LNP to feign concern over access to health care while cutting health services for vulnerable mums in Townsville. We rejected the LNP's claims of a GP tax during the election campaign and we will continue to reject them as anything other than a hoax designed to scare Queenslanders. I ask the Treasurer: what was Treasury's advice in the incoming government briefing on forgone revenue from the LNP's election commitment to exempt GPs from payroll tax? I can guess the answer. There was no forgone revenue because Labor had already acted on this issue.

The Labor opposition is of the view that the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill is unlikely to shift the dial on housing and certainly does nothing more than recognise the work that the Office for State Revenue had already done to prevent GP practices from paying payroll tax. We have always advocated for the rights of first home buyers in our state, and that is something we will continue to do moving forward, in the hopes of achieving targeted policies that actually prioritise those Queenslanders who need the help the most.