



Speech By
Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.53 pm): The Palaszczuk Labor government has delivered a budget for 2016-17 which, like last year, is fundamentally flawed. This year's budget is one of raids, rip-offs and writedowns. Last year the Treasurer announced a plan to shift general government debt to our government owned corporations whilst also suspending government contributions to the defined benefit scheme. Last year's budget included inappropriately accessing \$3.4 billion of the long service leave funding reserve pool, increasing debt at government owned corporations by \$4 billion and putting a freeze on over \$2 billion of government contributions for public servants. This year, we are seeing a further risk to our state's credit rating via Labor's plan to raid the defined benefit scheme of QSuper, threatening its viability and, in doing so, the entitlements of Queensland's public servants. Labor's \$4 billion raid on Public Service superannuation is twice the amount recommended by Queensland's State Actuary when he was asked for advice.

Given uncertain global financial circumstances, this must be seen as a folie à deux or lasègue-falret syndrome by those Labor members opposite. Because of Labor's raid, in future years the fund may not have enough assets to pay the superannuation entitlements of everyday Queenslanders, including many of my constituents in Moggill. By Labor doing so, local residents in my electorate could be called upon as taxpayers to bail out the defined benefit fund. There is not a long service leave entitlement or superannuation entitlement of public servants that the Premier and the Treasurer have not seen and then wanted to raid and take for their government's flawed budget debt strategy.

There is no doubt that Queensland's economy is falling behind that of other state jurisdictions. We have a Treasurer who is frozen and paralysed with fear, continuing as a member of an asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government. We know seasonally adjusted unemployment is up. In parts of regional Queensland youth unemployment is in excess of 15 per cent with further forecasted increases in unemployment. The Palaszczuk Labor government's employment minister, Grace Grace MP, has no plans to address youth unemployment, thereby letting down her union members and union bosses. In January of 2016 in the *Courier-Mail* the minister said—

I don't know that there's much you can change ... "There's always an issue with youth unemployment. It's not new, it's been around a long time."

Ms GRACE: I rise to a point of order. I have addressed this issue before. I take offence to the statement. It is quoted out of context. The member is misleading the House and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, the minister has asked you to withdraw.

Dr ROWAN: I withdraw. Participation rates have fallen and economic growth in Queensland is declining because of plummeting business confidence, unfavourable business conditions and a legislative agenda by this Labor government that is stifling investment and causing fear within some of our key industries as well as Queensland's very important resources sector. Queensland's domestic economy has contracted every single quarter whilst the Palaszczuk Labor government has been in power. Unfortunately, Labor has no realistic plan to grow jobs, let alone supercharge the economy. Car registration fee increases should never be nearly double the inflation rate. Labor should be focused on providing financial relief, not higher fees and charges for my constituents in Moggill. Taxes will increase by \$59 per person this year under the Palaszczuk Labor government.

The Treasurer has walked away from a number of election commitments. With this year's state budget, we have a raid by Labor on the superannuation of public servants, an increase in fees and charges twice the inflation rate and the Labor government also slapping a three per cent surcharge tax on foreign property investment. Infrastructure spending is down by 4.7 per cent and there has been an extra 4,000 public servants hired in the last year, which was originally budgeted for in 2015-16. In essence, this is an unsustainable spending spree on public servant expenses, with such expenses increasing six times the population rate. This is all occurring at the same time that the Labor government is delivering a legislative agenda that is harming our agriculture and resource sectors in Queensland. The Treasurer has also revealed a projected revenue writedown of \$4.7 billion compared to the 2015-16 budget, which is cause for great concern given the Treasurer's previous commitment to sustainable operating surpluses.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has now passed legislation to merge Ergon and Energex that will allow a new state entity to compete unfairly against mum-and-dad electrical contractors. What this decision really reveals is the contempt this government has for small business and how beholden it is to union bosses including those of the Electrical Trades Union. By embarking on this strategy, the Treasurer is showing that he is prepared to sell out Queensland's 10,000 privately owned electrical contractors for union bosses at the Electrical Trades Union who are, in fact, the de facto government of Queensland. This is absolutely a government of the unions and for the unions, a government beholden to unions such as the CFMEU, ETU and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation with the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption uncovering serious criminal activity at the highest levels within Queensland's trade unions.

As part of my budget reply speech, I now want to take this opportunity to address my shadow portfolio areas with respect to both the budget and also from a public policy perspective. Environmental and heritage protection is vital for Queensland. It is always a core consideration for me and all my LNP colleagues in all public policy endeavours, debates and subsequent legislative changes. The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection was established in April 2012 as a part of a series of evidence based changes to the machinery of government after the Liberal National Party assumed office. This occurred following the 2012 state election. Queensland's diverse heritage contributes to our sense of place, reinforces our identity and helps define what it means to be a Queenslander. Our places of heritage have been shaped by Queensland's history, environment, resources and people. They comprise places of cultural and natural significance that we want to keep, respect and pass on to future generations of Queenslanders.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (2.47 pm), continuing: Such places with heritage value include buildings, structures, cemeteries, archaeological sites, gardens, urban precincts and natural landscape features. It is important to note that heritage conservation does not require that places of heritage and value remain frozen in time and are never altered. The very best way to protect places of heritage is to ensure they continue to be actively used so that they are valued by the community. This can be equally applied to many of our national parks as a part of a balanced framework with respect to individualised active park management plans. The Liberal National Party will always empower and support governance structures with appropriate resourcing to achieve this outcome.

Whilst the budget this year for the environment appears to have a sugar hit, in fact budget funding out over four years shows a cut of \$2.7 million. Labor's funding commitments for the environment in this year's state budget are a serious disappointment. The community service grants program is really a reincarnation of an LNP initiative, and Labor's announced \$3.5 million koala program funding for 2016-17 was roundly slammed by key stakeholders when it was announced. Labor's budget for this year is a bit of a non-event in terms of genuine improvements for the environment. The announced \$2.7 million over three years for flying fox management strategies has limited detail on projected outcomes.

In Queensland heritage is protected and conserved using a framework which includes legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines. The Queensland Heritage Register is our public commitment to protecting our state's places of heritage significance. This register now contains more than 1,700 places of heritage significance in Queensland. There are also many more local places of heritage that have been recognised by local governments. Places of heritage trace the history of Queensland's growth and help us to generate important stories about our state's development and signify and recognise some of the most important lives and experiences of those Queenslanders who came before us. These places are now conserved by appropriate heritage legislation for generations to come.

This brings us to environmental protection, which is the very important public policy practice of ensuring our natural environment at all three levels—the individual, organisational and government levels—is not only maintained but also enhanced, if at all possible. Without strong environmental protections with respect to conservation and sustainability, we would run the real risk of damaging the health of Queensland's natural environment. Unfortunately, Labor's budget has failed to adequately address environmental protection strategies. We cannot talk about the importance of environmental protection without citing our Great Barrier Reef. Whilst it may not be the largest World Heritage area on earth, the Great Barrier Reef is certainly one of the better known. Our Great Barrier Reef covers 348,000 square kilometres and, to put this into perspective, it is bigger than the United Kingdom, Holland and Switzerland combined. The Great Barrier Reef was declared a World Heritage area in 1981 because of its outstanding universal value.

We are all only too aware today of the serious issue that coral bleaching is having on the Great Barrier Reef. When corals are stressed by changes in conditions such as temperature, light or nutrients, they expel the symbiotic algae living in their tissues, causing them to turn completely white. A healthy, resilient reef can either resist a stressful event like bleaching or die or recover from it. When coral bleaches, it is not dead. Corals can survive if water temperatures return to normal in the short term. The federal coalition government has already allocated \$460 million for reef and catchment projects in the past 2½ years. The Turnbull coalition government is also establishing a \$1 billion fund to protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change and declining water quality, with funding coming from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

We also know that the Queensland Liberal National Party did more in three years to protect the Great Barrier Reef than Labor did in 20 years in government. The Palaszczuk Labor government is all about reviewing and not doing, and we certainly know that Labor wants a carbon tax. It will certainly be interesting to see whether the Palaszczuk Labor government uses its allocated \$1.8 million or \$6.8 million over four years for climate change strategies to further develop or scope a carbon tax for Queensland. Whilst additional public expenditure has been allocated and will be required for the Great Barrier Reef, this funding must be evidence based as a result of peer published scientific research and open dialogue with all concerned. Addressing climate change in an evidence based manner and achieving the correct balance with respect to our environment—protecting the Great Barrier Reef, conserving our nature and unique flora and fauna and ensuring the sustainable management of our natural resources by enabling responsible access and development—as well as holding the Palaszczuk Labor government to account will be my priority goals as the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for the environment and heritage protection and shadow minister for national parks and the Great Barrier Reef.

It is also worth mentioning and acknowledging at this point that the world's best research in managing coral reefs happens right here in Queensland at the James Cook University in Townsville via the Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Marine Science. At this facility the world's largest concentration of coral reef scientists work with other leading institutions internationally, including scientists from the United States, Europe and Asia. It has been successive federal and state coalition governments that have delivered for the environment, including by prohibiting oil and gas exploration in the Great Barrier Reef, by banning both whaling and sandmining on Fraser Island, by creating the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, by establishing the world's first Oceans Policy and by committing to the Paris climate change agreement in 2015. This has recently been acknowledged by the Save Our Marine Life, an alliance of leading conservation organisations working to protect Australia's marine life.

The Liberal National Party is the party for the environment. A future Nicholls LNP government will deliver for the environment, which is why we have recently announced our support for a container deposit scheme for Queensland as well as eliminating the environmental harms of plastic bags. Our catchments, waterways and complex ecosystems need to be cherished and protected, and the LNP's announcement on a container deposit scheme as well as our support for eliminating the harms of plastic bags has been warmly welcomed by the Boomerang Alliance, SEQ Catchments, Healthy Waterways and Keep Queensland Beautiful. Much has been done. However, there is more to be done and more

environmental policies to be announced by the LNP, with the expectation that Queensland should have the best balance of environmental standards, protection and economic development. The delivery of clean and green energy solutions, including renewable fuels, requires technological innovation and the development of sustainable public-private financing models whilst at the same time also recognising and valuing the importance of existing energy sources and industries to our current economy.

I note that in my electorate of Moggill I am very fortunate to have a number of community organisations with significant environmental knowledge, skills and expertise. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Rural Environmental Planning Association, REPA, The Hut Environmental & Community Association, THECA, and the Cubberla-Witton, the Pullen Pullen and the Moggill Creek catchment groups for the work they do in my local area. Whether it be Trevor Dixon, Lloyd Brown or Brian Farrow of the Kenmore-Moggill RSL subbranch, Pam Scherman Carr and Robert Carr of Fairview, or Bishop Rob Nolan of the Anglican parish of Moggill and Mount Crosby, there are many people who are contributing to a vibrant, socially cohesive community in my local area.

I now intend to address my local electorate as a component of my budget reply speech and its needs that, once again, have not been addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated way in this year's budget despite significant correspondence to various ministers and departments and questions and speeches in this place, the Queensland parliament, about specific urgent local needs and required local public infrastructure investment. Again I make the point that many of the local infrastructure needs I have highlighted, and continue to do so, for the Moggill electorate were given bipartisan support by Labor's local candidate at the 2015 state election. The Moggill electorate has long been neglected by successive Labor governments with respect to the provision of public transport infrastructure and associated services. This year's Labor budget was no exception. Labor has been in charge of our Queensland government for 23 years of the past 27 years and Labor has consistently failed to deliver for the western suburbs of Brisbane.

The suburbs of Karana Downs, Anstead and Mount Crosby are in particular need of public transport services, given that the only accessible bus service to this area runs between the city and the suburbs of Bellbowrie and Moggill. Local residents of this area west of Bellbowrie have no bus service at all and need to travel to Moggill Road to connect with the 444 Moggill to the city service. An additional local high school is also a requirement given an increasing local population, changing demographics and capacity issues at Kenmore State High School. I have previously publicly called for a footbridge to be constructed at Colleges Crossing so as to allow for safe and improved access to the park on the other side.

Easing traffic congestion on Moggill Road requires a large, comprehensive, coordinated and methodical transport infrastructure strategy for Brisbane's western suburbs, including my electorate of Moggill. The Kenmore roundabout remains problematic and unaddressed. There is no doubt that public transport use must also be incentivised via a passenger fare system which is low in cost and which has a realistic zone travel classification at its core. Despite announcements for children under 14 that they will be provided free weekend public transport fares in South-East Queensland and Labor's other announcements with respect to the public transport zone system and fares, unfortunately for families, under this Labor government electricity costs have soared, car registration costs are now out of control, stamp duty has risen and cost-of-living pressures have become more profound. However, I am pleased that through my advocacy problematic black spot sections along Moggill Road are being addressed and in particular that the entry and exit to the Brisbane Independent School will finally be fixed over the next few months. I also note that in this year's budget there has been some allocation of funding to the Moggill Koala Hospital for koala conservation work.

Queenslanders and my constituents in Moggill deserve a government that has a credible and fair dinkum economic plan. We certainly do not need the continued economic vandalism of those opposite who are not delivering a truthful plan to deal with government debt and deficit and the fiscal challenges that are ahead for future generations. My constituents in Moggill urgently need a government that fosters a business environment for real job creation, enhances economic growth, invests in infrastructure, delivers cost-of-living relief for all and assists and supports small business. The Liberal National Party has pledged to keep car registration increases to the inflation rate for its first term of a future government. The LNP will recommit to red-tape reduction for small business and we have committed to real job creation via our Get Queensland Working jobs package. Unfortunately, this year's budget is about debt, deficit, higher unemployment, raids, rip-offs and writedowns. Only the LNP has the experience, the energy, the enthusiasm, the plans and the team to get Queensland moving.