




Speech By
Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 17 July 2015

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (10.22 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the consideration of the budget bills because it has been a long debate over the last couple of days, as it is every year. The introduction of the budget and the subsequent reply to the budget by members of this House is an annual recurrence in the parliament. I think I have seen 17 of them now. It is marvellous the similarities that one sees year after year.

You hear some great speeches. I think the speech that we just heard from the member for Chatsworth was right up there in terms of great speeches about a subject that he knows a lot about. You hear speeches such as from the member for Warrego and the member for Whitsunday who spoke particularly passionately about their own electorates. We have heard a range of good speeches in this House in the consideration of this budget.

This year, as in a lot of previous years, you also hear a lot of members make fools of themselves. Haven't we seen that this year! People come in here with speeches that have obviously been written by somebody else, they stand up and read words they cannot say and words they do not know the meaning of and make complete gooses of themselves. Is it any wonder that the Labor Party have perfected incorporating their speeches in *Hansard*. They do not have to practise the big words.

Can I suggest to you, Mr Treasurer, that next year when you come in here you should get somebody to explain to you what those words mean. It was obvious when you introduced the budget that you did not know the meaning of those words. I have seen you in front of media conferences. One thing that is startlingly obvious, besides all the debate about what the budget means, is that you do not understand the words you are using. You do not have to be an expert in body language or an expert in communication to know that. You clearly do not understand the words you are using. I would suggest to you that next year before you come down here and when you do those practises like I know you do for three or four days, that you—

Mr Pitt interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Member for Callide, I am willing to give you a bit of leeway. Please address your comments through the chair.

Mr SEENEY: I certainly will, but I have always worked on the assumption that the longstanding rule in this place is that if someone interjects then the speaker is allowed to respond. If the Treasurer wants to interject, he is fair game.

I am not going to try to repeat all of the examination of the budget that has been done by so many members on this side of the House. There is no doubt that this is a budget of the union movement. This is a government of the union movement. We can see the hand of the union movement in this budget just as we heard the words repeated over and over again by so many people on that side of the House.

The words that have been repeated most of all are that 'this is a Labor budget'. This is a real Labor budget. This is an old-style Labor budget. In a lot of respects that is absolutely right. There is no doubt about it. This is a Labor budget because it is financially irresponsible. It is a Labor budget because it does take Queensland further into debt. It is a Labor budget because it does pay back all those interest groups that Labor traditionally pays back.

This Labor budget goes much further than any previous Labor budget would ever have dared to go. This Labor budget raids the superannuation and long service leave accumulated funds of public servants whom the government employs.

As I said, I have been here for 17 years. I have seen a lot of Labor governments in this place. I have seen a lot of the Labor icons come and go.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SEENEY: Can I say in response to my young colleague opposite the member for Ashgrove that there are no Labor icons left in this parliament. The people who represent the Australian Labor Party in this parliament today are not worthy to carry the bags of the people who were here when I first came here. I had a lot of respect for some of those people. I had a lot of respect for people like Jim Elder and Terry Mackenroth and even Peter Beattie and Steve Bredhauer. Suggesting that this Labor team is anything like them is like suggesting that the ball boys at Lang Park are like the State of Origin team.

You lot do not deserve to lace up the boots of those guys who made up those Labor governments. They were people who had some political beliefs and political philosophy. Even though I disagreed with that, they came in here with the best interests of the state at heart. The budget we have seen tonight can be compared to Labor budgets in the same way that this government can be compared to those Labor governments. It is a pale imitation. It is a pale imitation of what we would expect from a Labor government. Nobody would expect a Labor government to raid the entitlements of public servants. Nobody would have expected that.

If you had come in here 10 years ago or 17 years ago when I first came here and said that a Labor government was going to raid the entitlements of Queensland's public servants, you would have been laughed out of the place. Nobody would have believed that, yet that is what this Treasurer has done. That is what this government has done. So, yes, it is a Labor budget in terms of its financial irresponsibility, but it sets a new standard for Labor budgets because it is a Labor budget that plunges to depths of financial irresponsibility that I do not think anyone ever anticipated and that certainly we have not seen in this parliament before.

It puts Queensland back on that debt trajectory that someday somebody will have to address. Someday somebody will have to address it. I have heard all sorts of nonsense from members opposite about how this budget starts the process of paying down debt. Anyone who wants to have a look at that knows perfectly well that it does not. The member for Chatsworth went into that in some great detail, and so have a whole range of members on this side of the House. It is only the loony left of the Labor Party that can believe that if you shift money from one account to another account you are somehow better off. To use the analogy that so many members have used, if you use one Bankcard to pay off the other Bankcard then you are somehow better off. It is only the loony left that would believe that.

Yet I have heard the Treasurer go one step further and suggest that loading up the electricity entities with debt somehow makes them stronger. It somehow makes them better. It somehow helps them. Can I say to the Treasurer: if loading some entity up with debt helps them, please stop helping the Queensland economy. Please stop helping every Queenslanders by loading us up with debt. But I suspect that it is a forlorn hope that he will do that. I know that the debt trajectory over the term of this government will take the total debt back to a level that somebody will have to address in the future, as my colleague the member for Clayfield said in his address.

There is no doubt that the money that has been made available by that financial sleight of hand has been spread well around the Labor electorates. Unfortunately, the electorate of Callide is not one of those, so I do not have a lot to talk about in terms of what this budget provides for my electorate, as so many other members in this place have done. So I will take the opportunity to talk for a minute about what the former LNP government did for regional Queensland generally.

For 14 years we sat in here and, budget after budget, saw Labor governments spend money all over the state but concentrate that spending certainly here in the south-east corner and in the major cities like Cairns and Townsville where they needed to win seats. Regional Queensland missed out year after year after year. We were determined when we came to government that, despite the horrific financial situation that we inherited, we would introduce a Royalties for the Regions program that would

seek to redress that failure over so many years. We allocated \$495 million to the Royalties for the Regions program.

When the election was called in January this year, there was between \$30 million and \$35 million unallocated in that fund, depending on the final costings of a couple of projects. The Labor government could not even allocate that money to regional Queensland. They could not even allocate the money that we had budgeted for Royalties for the Regions and the applications that were sitting up there in the office that the Deputy Premier now occupies. So that to me was a real indication of what regional Queensland can expect from a Labor government, and that expectation has certainly come to pass in this budget that we are talking about today.

It is a far cry from the proposals that the Treasurer put to the people of Queensland on the Thursday just before the election. Was it four pages or two pages?

Mrs Frecklington: It was two pages.

Mr SEENEY: It was two pages.

Mr Pitt: It was actually in the middle of the campaign.

Mr SEENEY: I say to the Treasurer that it was the Thursday before the election and there were two pages. Where in there, as the opposition leader said, was there anything about raiding the superannuation of public servants? Where in there was there anything about shifting debt to the government owned corporations and somehow making them better? I say to the Treasurer, as he sums up this debate, as he will shortly, that what he could do for this parliament is stand up and read those four pages or two pages, or whatever it was—stand up and read the proposition that he put to the people of Queensland in that week before the election.

We had a proposition, and I am happy to read it because we were up-front with the people of Queensland. It is the nature of this parliament—they call this a debate and sometimes I think that it is misnamed because members get the chance to stand up and say just about anything, and they do. I have sat here and listened to the Deputy Premier and the Minister for State Development say that there has not been an infrastructure plan and that we did not have an infrastructure plan. We had an \$8 billion infrastructure plan—an \$8 billion infrastructure plan—that for the first time in Queensland's history was fully funded. We not only identified the infrastructure but also identified the funding source, and that infrastructure plan was detailed right down to a project-by-project basis.

That was rejected by the people of Queensland—absolutely. I accept that. So now it is time to look at the alternative. Let's take a look at what the Treasurer promised the people of Queensland in that week before the election and compare that to what he has delivered in this budget. Let's see how much progress has been made in this budget in delivering what was in that four-page manifesto that we saw before the election. Of course there is no comparison. There is not even a connection. There are no similarities at all because nothing in this budget that we are considering in this House tonight bears any resemblance to what was promised to the people of Queensland. For that, if nothing else, this government stands condemned and this budget will be judged a failure.

I look forward to the consideration of the details of this budget when it is referred to the estimates committees. I think as we have an opportunity to delve deeper into the budget the financial vandalism, the financial irresponsibility, will become increasingly clear.