



Speech By
Jeff Seeneey

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2016

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

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (7.55 pm): As the Leader of Opposition Business I rise, as is a tradition in this House, to conclude the budget address-in-reply on behalf of the opposition. Can I begin by thanking and congratulating all of the opposition members who contributed to this debate over the last couple of days. I am proud of the way that opposition members have upheld the purpose of this parliament.

I have a fundamental concern about the way the government members have incorporated their speeches into *Hansard*. When we come to this place and begin to incorporate large quantities of material into *Hansard* we are going down a path that will inevitably lead to a point where we might as well all not be here.

In considering this question and in balancing the extent to which speeches were incorporated against the time constraints for people who obviously think they have a lot more important things to do, we have to remember the purpose of this parliament. When it is possible to incorporate such large amounts of material into *Hansard* then the purpose of this parliament is eroded. The purpose of this parliament—

Mr Dick: What complete rubbish.

Mr SEENEY: I would say to the member for Woodridge that the purpose of the *Hansard* record is not to allow government members to incorporate a whole range of material that is written by somebody else and emailed in here without the people whose name it stands under even beginning to understand it. One of the things that has been clear enough in this debate is that so many of the government members did not have a clue about the material they were incorporating. They did not understand the words that were supposedly theirs and were being incorporated into the record of this House. It was clearly obvious from the limited amount of delivery that we have seen in this place.

Every one of us was elected to be here as a parliamentarian—to stand in this place and represent the people who sent us here and not to come in here, as so many of the government backbenchers have done, and read speeches that they obviously did not write, to read speeches that were produced in some sort of cookie-cutter fashion so that they could have all of their material incorporated into *Hansard*.

Mrs LAUGA: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Callide is alleging that many members in this place, including myself, did not write our speeches. I personally take offence to that and I wish the member to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: On the point of order, the member cannot take offence because I did not mention the particular member. If she wants to identify herself as someone who did not write her speech—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Crawford): Thank you, member for Callide. I find no point of order on that.

Mr SEENEY: I particularly congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for the contribution that he made. It stands in stark contrast to the contribution that was made by the Treasurer when he delivered his speech. One of the features of this budget, if you like—and I have seen quite a few in this place—was the sheer unbelievability of it. That was reflected in the delivery of the Treasurer when he delivered his speech in here on Tuesday afternoon. As the Leader of the Opposition said, he could not deliver a pizza. It was obvious that his heart was not in it, he did not understand the words and he did not understand the concepts, and his body language showed it. Never was there a more reluctant Treasurer than the one who came in here on Tuesday afternoon.

After about 10 days of gaffes, mistakes and sheer ridicule from the financial community in Queensland, he trotted in here with his tail between his legs for one of the most dismal budget performances that I have seen in the 20 years I have been in here. The sheer unbelievability of the Treasurer's delivery has been reflected in the delivery of every other member in this parliament. They believed it so much, they were so fired up by it, they were so passionate about it that they had to incorporate their speeches rather than stand in here and fulfil the purpose of this parliament—such was their passion. It flowed directly from the passion that was exhibited by the Treasurer when he came in here with what would be the most unbelievable budget that I have seen in the 20 years I have been here.

It is worthwhile asking yourself what a budget is supposed to be. The member for Southport touched on this, as did the member for Chatsworth. What is a budget supposed to be? In the rest of the world, out in the corporate world or in local government, it is supposed to be a document that sets the expectation of the entity in relation to its income and its expenditure. It is supposed to be a document that imposes discipline on that organisation to meet those targets. A budget is supposed to be a document against which the management of the organisation is judged and their performance is assessed, but the document that was presented to this parliament on Tuesday would never serve any of those purposes. Does anybody seriously believe the projections that were in the document presented by the member for Mulgrave? Does anybody seriously believe the growth forecasts that—

Mr Rickuss: Four per cent.

Mr SEENEY: Yes, four per cent. Does anybody seriously believe that? Do any of those mindless backbenchers up there think we are going to come in here in 12 months time and see a four per cent growth rate? Of course we are not. That is what makes the budget so unbelievable. Does anybody really believe that we are going to come in here in 12 months time and see all these jobs created because you have all stood up and said, 'This is a jobs budget'?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members!

Mr SEENEY: You can stay—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide, I am on my feet. Resume your seat now. You will be warned under standing order 253. You know the position when the Speaker is on his feet. Members, there is more work to be done tonight. I would urge you to show some respect and consideration in your contributions.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I begin by apologising. I did not even know you were there. I am sorry. I absolutely understand the protocol when you are on your feet. I will continue questioning the remotest possibility that anybody would seriously believe the projections that are in this budget document.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I know you are primed, member for Callide. I know you have been here all day and you have been very tolerant listening to the contributions. Member for Lockyer, I do not think the member for Callide needs any prompting. I urge the government members to not prompt the member for Callide and we might get through this speech and move onto the vote, as well as the other bill which is waiting in the wings to be debated which I think will take a number of hours.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, as you say, I have been here for a couple of days, as is my responsibility in this position, and I have been saddened by the level of debate that has characterised this budget in reply debate and by the whole budget process. The budget that that has been introduced into this parliament this week is characterised by this unbelievability—this unbelievability around its key

measures, the key elements, the things that define what a budget is. Nobody believes them. No-one in here believes them; no-one out in the community believes them. No-one out in the community believes that this government is going to reduce debt. Of course they are not, because in the budget documents themselves debt is going up. Nobody out in the community believes that this government is going to constrain the growth of the Public Service. Of course they are not because the figures in the documents themselves show the increase in the Public Service numbers.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The Treasurer comes in here and talks about his fiscal elements or whatever the term was—the things that are going to guide him.

An honourable member: Fiscal principles.

Mr SEENEY: Yes, the fiscal principles, that is the one—the fiscal principles that he is going to be guided by.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, I know you are primed. I would urge you to make your comments through the chair and then you will know when I want you to pause for a moment. The Treasurer will have an opportunity to respond. As I understand it, I do not think the member for Callide interjected on anyone during the debate on the Appropriation Bill. I certainly have not heard it.

Mr SEENEY: That is unusual, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: That is unusual, but I think you are making up for it now.

Mr SEENEY: At the conclusion of this budget in reply debate—and it is called a debate—it is important to see the budget for what it is, and the process has demonstrated that. The process in this House has reflected the reception in the community. The process in this House has laid bare the unbelievability of the document that the Treasurer presented on Tuesday afternoon. As I was saying, the fiscal principles that he referred to are in themselves an indication of the unbelievability because the fiscal principles were broken, were destroyed, no longer applied as soon as he said them—especially in relation to the government's so-called constraint of the growth in the Public Service and the expenses that go with that.

One of the things that someone such as me who has sat in this place for a long time gets to see is the body language and the interchange between members in this House. We know when there is disruption in the ranks on either side; you can tell, you can see.

An honourable member: You can smell it.

Mr SEENEY: Absolutely.

Mr SPEAKER: Can you come back to the theme, please.

Mr SEENEY: This week, one of the features of this budget has been the lack of enthusiasm by the members of the government for the budget. It is clear to me that even they do not believe it. It is clear to me that even they have grave concerns about the document that the Treasurer introduced. When we watch members such as the member for South Brisbane and the member for Woodridge and the way they respond to the answers that the Treasurer gave in answer to questions about the budget over the last couple of days, we can see the contempt writ large. They know that their government has a—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! One moment, a point of order. Pause the clock.

Mr DICK: I rise to a point of order. I am taking a point of order. I think I have the call.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, come on.

Mr DICK: I take personal offence at the idea, the suggestion and the words used by the member for Callide. I ask him to withdraw. Mr Speaker, I also draw you to the point of relevance. This is the second time the member for Callide has not spoken one word at all about Appropriation Bills, about the budget papers, about the—

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister.

Mr DICK: No, it is a slur on members to describe their demeanour and the smell, as those members opposite have described. It is a slur on this parliament and members when he is not speaking to the parliament and I ask you to bring him back to the relevance of the budget.

Mr SPEAKER: The *Hansard* record will show I have already asked the member for Callide to come back to the purpose of the bill. Member for Callide, will you withdraw any of those comments that the minister finds personally offensive?

Mr SEENEY: I will withdraw whatever the member finds personally offensive. I thank the member for Woodridge for his guidance. When the member for Woodridge was in this House as the member for Greenslopes, he was well known to have the most fragile glass jaw in the place.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, we do not want to get into personalities. Please, member for Callide, can you come back to the bills.

Mr SEENEY: I know that those were the bad old days; we do not do that anymore. We are nice to each other now in this parliament. I am happy to be nice to the member for Woodridge.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, can you please come back to the purpose of the bills we are debating tonight?

Mr SEENEY: Absolutely. As I was saying before I was interrupted, this budget is characterised by the sheer unbelievability of a number of its key elements. I think the element that is most unbelievable is this notion that somehow or other the Treasurer is doing Queensland a favour by repatriating a lost \$4 billion. It sounds as though he has found a flock of sheep that has been lost and he is bringing them home—repatriating \$4 billion of superannuation funds. The question I think that the Treasurer needs to answer at the conclusion of this debate is the question that every Queenslanders who has thought about this is asking, and that is: why is he the one who has suddenly found these lost sheep? What about all the other treasurers who have struggled with the task of balancing the state's income against its expenditure? What about all the other Labor treasurers stretching back in time? What about people like Terry Mackenroth, who was treasurer; David Hamill, who was treasurer; Keith De Lacy, who was treasurer; and Anna Bligh, who was treasurer? What about those Labor treasurers? Did they not know about this flock of lost sheep that suddenly the member for Mulgrave has found and now he is going to repatriate; he is going to bring them home? Of course it is nonsense.

The people of Queensland know that this is the second fiddle in two years. Last year there was a \$4 billion fiddle. There was a \$4 billion con as he shifted debt on to the government owned corporations.

Mr Walker interjected.

Mr SEENEY: That was an extra; that was over and above. The member for Mansfield talks about the holiday contributions. That was over and above the \$4 billion fiddle that was perpetrated on the government owned corporations. This year there is another \$4 billion fiddle, another \$4 billion fraud that the Treasurer seeks to explain as 'repatriating these lost dollars'. Nobody in this House believes that. Even the government backbenchers do not believe it. Even though they stand up like loyal soldiers and read the speeches they have been given, they know in their hearts that they are not repatriating lost funds. The Treasurer is not repatriating lost funds; he is sticking his hand into the last hollow log that the government can find and he is taking out—

Mr HARPER: I rise to a point of order. I ask him to withdraw. The member for Callide has suggested that we have—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. I have heard your point of order. It is not a point of order. There has been no personal reflection on you as the individual member or by way of your electorate. The member for Callide has six minutes left.

Mr SEENEY: I think that claim, above all else, highlights the unbelievability of the budget. It highlights the unbelievability of the sales job or the message that the Treasurer has tried to communicate that has been so soundly rejected in this parliament, across the state and in the media over the last three days and that will continue to be over the next few weeks as the people of Queensland come to understand that two fiddles in two years is not sound financial management.

One of the other things that I think has been indicative of the debate in this House over the last two days as I have sat here and listened and reflected on debates in the past, is the extent to which every government member has sought to justify the budget by attacking the opposition and the opposition leader as if by doing that somehow the budget can be justified. They think that somehow that absurd financial management, those stupid claims about repatriating funds and meeting targets that everyone knows are impossible can somehow be achieved if only they can show how horrid this particular member is or how nasty that particular member is. Then all of a sudden everything will be right; the finances of Queensland will suddenly be good. That is as absurd as the other thing that every

member of the government did. Every member of the government—or every speechwriter who wrote the speeches for them—was working on the principle that if they say it enough times it will be, that somehow or other repetition creates reality. In the real world it does not. Repetition does not create reality. Hard work creates reality. If they want to build infrastructure, they have to get out there and make it happen. If they want to create jobs they have to free up the elements of the economy that create jobs. They cannot just come in here and repeat it over and over again.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr SEENEY: I will take the interjection from the Leader of the House because that is a great example. He and the Minister for State Development come in here and knock what we did in terms of our Royalties for the Regions program—\$500 million invested in infrastructure in regional Queensland. The program that they replaced it with has invested \$400,000, yet they come in here—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, thank you. Leader of the House, please do not provoke the member for Callide.

Mr SEENEY: However, they come out, as the member for Ipswich did last weekend, and open the projects; they come up and snip the ribbon and say, 'The Queensland government is delighted to invest in this infrastructure.' That is the hypocrisy of this government. They criticise the work that we did to make those projects happen. They cannot make the projects happen themselves. They are frozen at the wheel. They are bogged down in terms of any sort of administration, but they love to take the credit for what we did, just as the Minister for Main Roads did in relation to the work that the member for Hervey Bay did on the intersection in his particular electorate.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Callide, one moment. I know you are in full flight. Leader of the House, please do not provoke the member for Callide at this stage. It is getting late and there is another bill to come.

Mr SEENEY: The other point that I would like to make before my time regrettably runs out is to say to all of the innocent government backbenchers who stood up here and read those speeches with some sort of 'cargo cult' delivery, just listing off all the things that were happening in their electorates: can I let you in on a secret? All of those things are part of departmental programs. They happen anyway. You did not make them happen: they happen anyway. They are part of departmental programs. Whether it is a program in the health department or a program in the education department, they happen anyway. You can stand up here and take the credit, but you had absolutely nothing to do with it. Your contribution to this budget reply was to read out a list of things that you got in your electorate and then move that the rest be incorporated. You failed in your duty as MPs because you did not scrutinise the legislation that the Treasurer introduced into this House and—

(Time expired)