



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

BILLS

**Appropriation (Parliamentary
Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2018-2019**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Tuesday, 22 May 2018

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 22 May 2018 Page 101 Questioner Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (17:26): A fish rots from the head. I can only assume that the member opposite who has just spoken, the member for Kingsford Smith, has totally swallowed the Kool Aid from the Leader of the Opposition, in what was either a dishonest or an economically clueless presentation of the facts—or somebody else wrote his speech.

I notice that he only left the last five minutes of his speech to actually talk about the budget, which is what this session is meant to be all about. Instead, he wanted to talk about another topic altogether. Once he got to talking about the budget, of course, his favourite word was 'cuts'. Yet again, the facts tell a very different story. As was mentioned today in the House, by both the Prime Minister and then the Minister for Health, there are ads being run by the Labor Party in the seat of Longman in Queensland—because there's a by-election looming—suggesting that there have actually been cuts to hospitals. Whereas—and the minister laid the facts down in the House—in fact the state Labor government has decreased funding to hospitals while the coalition has increased funding.

But this is what the Labor Party does: absolute dishonesty. You can't have it both ways. Either you are economically illiterate or you are dishonest. I put to this chamber that the speech we just heard from the member for Kingsford Smith was full of absolute dishonesties, and the losers through that are, in fact, the Australian people who believe such concoctions: the very people who are vulnerable and who need assistance, whether it be in health, in welfare, in education. Once they swallow the rot that has set in, their fears escalate. Their anxiety escalates. It is the Australian people who are living decent lives who are affected by Labor's lies.

Let's look at this budget, firstly from where we have come—and we've come a long way. We've come, of course, from the back of that disastrous Rudd-Gillard-Rudd era. It almost sends a shiver down the spine when you think of what they did to this country. Of course, they inherited a \$15.6 billion credit. There was no debt from the Howard government—we had credit of \$15.6 billion. What did they do? They, of course, just racked up deficit after deficit on a spend-a-thon, leaving us with well over \$200 billion in debt. Labor, of course, also left us endless commitments for the Commonwealth to oblige, and that, again, has put pressure on this coalition government. But, we are on track to bringing commonsense and economic stability back.

The Australian economy is now looking strong in its 27th consecutive year of economic growth. GDP and government receipts are up. Our growth in spending is at its lowest rate in 50 years. As a percentage of GDP, costs are down and receipts are up. This means the deficit can narrow, then we are on path to a surplus. A \$14.5 billion deficit is forecast for the next financial year. In the year after that will turn into a \$2.2 billion surplus and then, at the end of the forward estimates, we're looking at \$16.6 billion in surplus. We also know the strength of the Australian economy has seen us maintain our triple-A credit rating despite the fact that, compared to most other countries in the world, our borrowings are so highly exposed to the international market. Over a million jobs have been created since we came to office in 2013, and well over 1,000 jobs every single day over the last year. Business confidence is building, and it's no wonder the IMF has upgraded its ratings for the Australian economy.

But there is no room for complacency, and the budget demonstrates an ongoing commitment at the national level. We're delivering tax relief to hardworking Australians, ensuring taxes will be lower, fairer and flatter. We're supporting business to invest and create more jobs with our enterprise tax plan. FTAs have been signed off under the Abbott government and then under the Turnbull government, along with our \$75 billion transport infrastructure plan. We're guaranteeing the essential services that Australians rely upon. We're talking about \$24.5 billion in extra school funding. The opposition call that a cut, but most people will understand that, when more money goes into something, that's called additional funding, not a cut. We have record hospital and Medicare funding, new drugs added to the PBS, and nearly one million families supported by the government's new childcare package due in July this year.

We're helping older Australians stay in their own homes longer, adding an extra 14,000 home care packages over four years on top of the 6,000 places last December. We're continuing to keep Australians safe with \$294

million to boost airport security, including \$50 million for specialised security upgrades at regional airports, and over \$160 million to help law enforcement and security agencies fight crime and terrorism. I ask anyone in the chamber: did the Leader of the Opposition even talk about security in his budget reply speech? Did he mention the importance of protecting our borders? Not a thing, absolute silence! This again shows the priorities of the Labor Party compared to those of the coalition.

Queensland is a big winner out of this budget: over \$20 billion for infrastructure, and over \$5 billion announced for new projects. That includes an extra \$3.3 billion for the Bruce Highway. Up until the budget speech from the Treasurer, there was \$6.7 billion of federal funding for the Bruce Highway. This contribution means we now have \$10 billion for Queensland's Bruce Highway. Queensland hospitals will receive \$29.5 billion over the next five years. That is a real funding increase of 34 per cent on the previous five years. There will be record levels of support for Queensland schools: \$52.2 billion over 10 years. We're fully funding the NDIS, which will help support nearly 96,300 Queenslanders with a disability.

Then there's that wonderful place in the world called the Sunshine Coast. Never before in our history has the Sunshine Coast been the recipient of so much federal government funding. Let me underscore that by saying it again: never in our history has the Sunshine Coast received so much funding from the federal government. This budget was almost custom-made for the Sunshine Coast because we saw an amazing trifecta of infrastructure spending for the Sunshine Coast. We saw that in over \$2 billion of spending for our region. We saw \$800 million go towards section D between Cooroy and Curra. We saw \$880 million for between Pine Rivers and Caloundra. Of course, when it comes to rail, \$390 million is contributed to the upgrade of the North Coast line between Beerburrum and Nambour.

Over \$2 billion in this one budget of this coalition government will assist the region of the Sunshine Coast. This comes on top of the existing \$1.6 billion that is already being spent and is committed to that stretch of the Bruce Highway. This comes on top of the \$181 million concessional loan for the Sunshine Coast Airport so it can become a fully-fledged international airport. There is nothing that growing successful regions need more from the federal government than assistance with vital infrastructure—infrastructure that not only gets people and products from A to B but attracts investment as a result to those regions. That is precisely what this government is doing for the region of the Sunshine Coast.

In addition to that trifecta of \$2 billion of infrastructure, 70 schools across the region of the Sunshine Coast are set to benefit with more money per student for the next 10 years. Yet again those 70 schools on the Sunshine Coast are being looked after by this Turnbull coalition government. What's more, there has been another commitment made in this budget to extend the chaplaincy services. I'm delighted about this because the chaplains play a vital role in schools across the Sunshine Coast. The Scripture Union runs the chaplaincy services in Queensland. The impact that those chappies have on young people in schools is nothing short of first class. Again this budget delivers because it ensures that young people in schools can always have a chat to a chappie, because that chappie is going to still be there. That commitment has been made right across the forward estimates.

Nearly 40,000 small and medium businesses on the Sunshine Coast are already enjoying a company tax cut. As a result these businesses have either more money in their pocket, more money for investing in their business or more money for employing other people. This is where the rubber hits the road with the coalition's plans, because they are always pragmatic plans that work out in the real economy. We have seen 40,000 small and medium businesses enjoying company tax cuts on the Sunshine Coast.

We saw in this budget the extension of the \$20,000 instant asset write-off. The number of businesses I've spoken to is extraordinary. When I have a chat, they say they want practical assistance. This instant asset write-off has been a miracle for some of them. Around 5,000 in my part of the world have already leveraged this, and, of course, it remains open to 40,000.

Over 126,000 residents on the Sunshine Coast will enjoy immediate tax relief. With all the pressures on individuals and on families at the moment, this tax relief is going to count. Of course, we know that this tax relief for low- and medium-income earners is but step 1 in a three-step, seven-year tax plan that will ensure that we have a tax system in Australia that is flatter, simpler and fairer. I'm told that there are approximately 4,932 people with a disability on the Sunshine Coast. That's nearly 5,000 people, probably 5,000 families, who have the peace of mind of knowing that the NDIS is fully funded. It's a reminder that the economy is not the end game; it's the means to an end. Only with a strong economy do we have the ability to guarantee the NDIS. Only with a strong

economy do we have the ability to guarantee health funding. Only with a strong economy can we guarantee the safety net of welfare. Only with a strong economy can we ensure that our students are educated, that our young people are given their best chance in the world; it is only with a strong economy. And so, with that, I am delighted to stand today to fully endorse the budget that the Treasurer has brought down. I look forward to seeing whether or not the Labor Party come to their senses and support the measures in it.