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Member for Hammond

## HANSARD

House of Assembly  
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### LATE PAYMENT OF GOVERNMENT DEBTS (INTEREST) BILL

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:03):** I rise, too, to support the Late Payment of Government Debts (Interest) Bill 2013. It is amazing that we have come to this, where the government has to virtually copy opposition policy; but, not only that, we also have a bill in this place where the government has to make sure that it might do something about the debt that it has to small business. It is very commendable in some ways that there is a commitment to the interest on this debt, but why do we get in debt, Mr Speaker? That is a very, very good question. We have got here because of the total incompetence of the Labor government, we have got here because it is a government that does not understand how a small business works. Sadly, what has happened in the preceding years of this government is that businesses have suffered due to their bills not being paid and, in fact, some of them are going out of business due to their bills not being paid in a timely manner.

Sadly, you see in the corporate world that some people think, as this government has thought, that they can get away with stringing people out to 60, 90 or 120 days, and it is just wrong. It is just wrong in the world of any business to string any business out for anymore than the appropriate 30 days, which are standard trading terms, but too often we see that happen.

What we have seen with this government is the Shared Services debacle. This was supposed to save millions of dollars for the state, but Shared Services is costing the state tens and tens of millions of dollars more than what was originally budgeted. It has been a complete mess. It has taken people away from regional jobs throughout this state—jobs throughout my electorate from Murray Bridge and other areas.

Those jobs have gone because, oh yes, we are going to put all this into a central block in Adelaide, and life will be merry. Well, life has been far from merry with Shared Services. In fact, the place should just be rocketed and got rid of. We should just get rid of it.

**The Hon. M.F. O'Brien interjecting:**

**Mr PEDERICK:** You will get your response, minister—that's fine—but it is an absolute disaster that you have presided over. I must say that, over time, as the member for Kavel indicated, we have had equipment in our own offices to operate for our own needs either threatened to be shut down because bills have not been paid, or ones that have been shut down so members of parliament cannot even make sure that their work is carried out effectively. It is just ridiculous.

It got to the stage, actually, in my office where I got sick of not just what was happening internally with the payments but the small businesses, like the newspaper vendor, coming to me and saying, 'Our bills are not getting paid.' I said, 'Enough is enough; we will send copies of the bills straight through to the minister's office,' which we did and I am sure he received them. I just had to make the point about what was happening and the abuse we were getting from people who deserved to have their bills paid.

I know the minister suggested, 'With some of your internal accounts, you could pay them and then we will pay you back.' I said, 'I don't think I am going down that path.' Certainly, as an opposition member, I am not stumping up the government's debt, especially when we see it burgeoning out to \$13.75 billion by the year 2016.

It is just ridiculous that it has got to this because, in the whole machinery of government, we cannot get enough people together to actually pay the bills on time. I ask the question: what do we have a bureaucracy for? What the heck do we have a bureaucracy for? It is supposedly to run the functions of government and everything around it but, no, it is a complete disaster—an absolutely abject disaster—that we have got to this stage where the government have even had to come forward, pretty well copy our policy proposal and say, 'We will pay for interest on bills that are over 30 days overdue.' As I said, that is one measure. I note the Small Business Commissioner will become involved if there are disputes but, if people are still hung out to dry for over 30 days, it is not just the interest they are wearing: they are also wearing the principal, so that comes at a huge cost to suppliers to government. Certainly, I note that we are agreeing to the bill. I think it is disgraceful that we have got to this stage, but I certainly support it because we, on this side of the house, understand the support that small business needs in this state.

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