




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.58 pm): I rise to congratulate the hardworking Treasurer on his third budget. This is a workmanlike budget and it is a budget that lays out a strong plan for a brighter future for Queensland and all Queenslanders. It is a budget that does not shirk responsibility. It is a budget that does not hide behind debt and deficit—the hallmark of former Labor treasurers. It is an honest budget. It is a budget that lays out a strong plan for a brighter future for all Queenslanders and particularly those living in regional Queensland and in Toowoomba.

A very important announcement was made during the budget, and I would like to thank the Treasurer for it. It was just over two years ago that I stood here in this House and gave my maiden speech. In my maiden speech I invoked the first words of the first member for Toowoomba and Darling Downs, the late John Watts. He was a member of this House over 150 years ago and he had a desire to see a road built to the capital and to the port that was of a standard equal to the other roads in the state. It has taken 154 years, but finally we have a Treasurer in this state who has announced the state's share of the funding—20 per cent, fully funded in this budget, ready to go. Many people in Toowoomba have spoken about building a second range crossing and many people in Toowoomba have said that they would make this happen. But this Treasurer, this government, has made it happen—

Mr Dillaway: And the local member.

Mr WATTS: I take the interjection—and the local member. The people of the Darling Downs, and especially all of the people who live in Toowoomba, are very thankful to see this finally happen. This is a budget that stops talking about doing things and actually starts delivering things. It sees a level of cooperation between the state and federal government that the people of Toowoomba have been waiting many, many years for. Now the families of Toowoomba will be able to get their children to school on time without having to do battle with B-doubles. For many long years the people of my town have wanted to be able to go to the shops without wrestling with the state's industrial traffic. For many long years the mums and dads have had fear struck into their hearts as their kids venture to the park and in doing so have to cross one of the busiest industrial roads that Queensland has.

With this strong government the people of Toowoomba can confidently know that they are being listened to, that their needs will be heard in this place—needs that have fallen on deaf ears for so many years. Well, Toowoomba, John McVeigh and I have presented your case for a second range crossing to a strong government. That government has listened and it has delivered a partnership—

Mr Rickuss: What about me?

Mr WATTS: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. He was definitely a strong voice also. I recognise that the bulk of the works are in his electorate. If only his electorate was flatter, we would not need to spend so much money! This partnership with the federal government will finally see the road built. I would like to put on record my thanks to the Treasurer, the Hon. Tim Nicholls; my thanks to the Premier, the Hon. Campbell Newman; and my thanks to both the Deputy Premier, the

Hon. Jeff Seeney, and the Minister for Transport and Roads, the Hon. Scott Emerson. I would also like to recognise the longstanding efforts of my federal member, the Minister for Industry, the Hon. Ian Macfarlane, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss. My council have also worked hard to ensure that this road happens and they will have key works to do in connecting this road to the community. So I certainly thank all of the councillors including the mayor, Paul Antonio, for that.

There are many people who have contributed to the project, but we have to ask why the project is so important. It is important to make sure that our businesses are efficient and that our resources and our agriculture get to the port efficiently. But it is more important for the people of Toowoomba to have their lifestyle back. It is more important for the people of Toowoomba to be able to get their kids to school on time safely and effectively without having to deal with this road. If I have played any part in getting this range crossing built for the people of Toowoomba and regional Queensland, I hope that my part will be remembered as that of a little blue cattle dog—tenacious, determined, unafraid and also willing to nip at the ankles when necessary to keep this project moving.

Compare and contrast that with the former Labor member, who spoke about the range crossing in his maiden speech some 13 years ago. All we ever got was words. He served four terms in the government. He served as a cabinet minister, and all we got was talk and platitudes from a government that could not manage money, could not deliver for Toowoomba and could not deliver for Queensland. All it ever created was mess and incompetence.

There are many more provisions in the budget for my electorate. Before I elaborate on those, I would just like to ask people to consider for a moment why we have government at all. Government is here so people can achieve their dreams so that they can be all they can be. Government is here to protect the weak, educate the young and provide services, facilities and infrastructure that communities need to feel safe and to have fulfilling lives. This government is here to serve the people. This is a strong government that will serve Queensland well.

Governments tax the population to do these things, but we have not needed to increase taxes in this budget because of good management. Strong governments will treasure the tax dollar. They will protect it from waste and squander. They will carefully consider its application and how it might best serve the people. They will carefully consider and weigh up the options. That is what this budget does. That is what this Treasurer has done. Compare and contrast the LNP Treasurer, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, with the last Labor Treasurer, Andrew Fraser. He was called the wonder boy and the only thing Queensland were left wondering was what he had done with all the money.

Let us have a look at education. Education in my electorate has been served very well. There are some great schools in my electorate that were left basically derelict by the former Labor government. Some had gutters that leaked, and I actually visited a school where paint was falling off the ceiling on to the children's books as they were trying to read. The people of Toowoomba were neglected and ignored, and so were their children.

Labor squandered Queensland's hard-earned money. Compare and contrast that with the LNP. Our strong government is providing modern, clean, safe, up-to-date facilities in which to educate our children. In Toowoomba we have spent over \$10 million on Flying Start capital assistance. Whilst \$10 million is a lot of money, I ask the mums and dads to consider why the money has been spent. They can be reassured that as their children enter grade 7 they will have good quality facilities, they will have a good environment and they will have the support services they need to be successful—because they are the future doctors, nurses, businesspeople and the ones who will do all of the jobs that we need done in our society. So providing them with that, I think, is a good and worthy cause.

But so much more has been done in education. I thank the education minister for building the schools that we need in the areas that we need them, such as Highfields. Highfields is an area that is growing. It has over 1,000 children—nearly 1,500—catching buses every day. They spend around an hour and a half or sometimes two hours with the interchange to get to and from school, and that is just unacceptable. So to have a school in their local community means that they can participate in extracurricular activities after school and form part of the community. I think that is a very worthy and good investment. I thank both the Treasurer for funding it and the minister for building it.

It is great to see the slab has been poured and the walls are going up. Again, this is a project that has been talked about in my electorate since around 2005—talk, talk, talk. We had a government minister as the local representative—more talk and no action. We announced that we would buy the land in 2009, and a couple of weeks later all of a sudden wonder boy Treasurer, who squandered all the money, managed to find some money to buy the land. The local member proudly announced they would build it, and then it just sat there again—an empty block of land. Now that land has buildings on it and there is an oval. The slab has been poured, the roof is going on and people will soon see their children being educated in their own community.

When it comes to health, I think the Treasurer and the health minister have done a fantastic job not only increasing health funding for the Darling Downs but increasing health funding in total by 17.6 per cent compared to the last Labor budget. That is an extra \$92 million a year being spent on front-line services in Toowoomba. But it is not just about the money. I said earlier that what people want from their government when it comes to health is to know that they can rely on us to help when they need us.

The Darling Downs Hospital and Health Board, led by Mike Horan, with the hardworking doctors, nurses and support staff, has delivered—and let's just compare and contrast this with Labor—massive improvements. Those improvements include from 65 per cent of people being seen within four hours at the emergency department to now 83 per cent—nearly a 20 per cent improvement. Under Labor, 10 out of 100 people were left waiting past the 30-day deadline for category 1 surgery. Now 100 per cent are being seen on time. Category 2 was the same—10 out of 100 people were left waiting past the 90-day deadline for their very necessary surgery. It is completely unacceptable to the community of the Darling Downs. That has been fixed by Minister Springborg, and the funds have been provided by the Treasurer.

What about our long dental waiting list? Listen to this figure: 7,210 people were waiting to have their teeth seen under this government; it is now zero. BreastScreening services in my electorate are running ahead by 690 people currently. They are in front of their target and have seen 14,190 people screened this year. This is not just about saving dollars; this is about saving lives.

It is very important that we understand that the budget provided by the Treasurer and the government is here to serve the people of Queensland. I thank the Treasurer for the service he has given to the people of Toowoomba by giving us the range crossing. If I had more time, I would talk to you about the wonderful Royalties for the Regions program in my electorate, where \$45 million is being spent on a ring road that will also improve some of the flooding and prevent my town from going under water if we ever see a weather event such as we have had before. I commend the Treasurer for this hardworking budget. It will lead to brighter futures for the people of Queensland. It is a strong government. I think the investment in our infrastructure in our regions is a wonderful investment and the people of my electorate certainly thank him for it.