




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 17 July 2015

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (4.47 pm): I rise to support the appropriation bills and to congratulate the Treasurer for his hard work. This is a responsible and measured budget—a budget that reflects true Labor values and puts the best interests of all Queenslanders first. It is a budget I am very proud of. It is a budget that delivers jobs now and jobs for the future. It contains the right decisions in Queensland's interests, and it is unashamedly a work based on Labor principles—one that clearly demonstrates there is a better way for Queensland and Queensland families.

We will not take the LNP's lazy approach of selling assets to raise a quick \$37 billion. Queenslanders, with their innate sense of fair play and decency, roundly rejected this approach, leaving the LNP exposed as a policy-free zone. Their latest desperate attempt was a glossy affair cobbled together at their state convention, clearly designed to boost their party membership. They have come up with no plan—no alternative plan. The LNP has done nothing to improve the budget bottom line—no plan to create or sustain jobs—and, breathtakingly, it leaves the door open for asset sales into the future.

My government's budget champions health and education as the fundamental platforms for what Labor governments are all about. My government has unashamedly refocused attention on these key portfolios as we restore social justice in this state for those in danger of falling through the cracks. We will apply all of our energy and acumen to the crucial task of building the state and restoring essential front-line services. That is what we promised at the last election and this budget delivers to the people of Queensland.

As the Treasurer stated—and, again, I reinforce it today—we will manage the state's finances responsibly. My government expects a \$962 million surplus for the 2014-15 year, and over this financial year alone a \$1.2 billion surplus is forecast. We are confidently predicting surpluses of over \$2 billion in the following two years. Combined surpluses over the next four years will be \$6.9 billion, the largest surpluses in the nation and achieved in the face of reduced royalty revenue and a \$396 million writedown in payroll tax.

Economic growth is forecast to improve from two per cent in 2014-15 to 4½ per cent in the next two years, stronger than any other state in the country. Unemployment averaging 6½ per cent in 2014-15 is far too high. Our enduring challenge is to get this down. Since the election the trend unemployment has fallen to 6.3 per cent with 23,100 full-time jobs created. Creating jobs is our No. 1 priority and it is fundamental to our economic agenda.

Job creation is the core of our Working Queensland jobs plan and the \$180 million Advance Queensland package, measures that will deliver jobs now and create jobs into the future. I have boosted my \$50 million election commitment for Advance Queensland to \$180 million to fully fund its programs to bridge the gap between great ideas and the jobs that they can lead to. It will enhance and build on the impressive legacies of Labor governments to grow our recognised expertise in areas such as

medical science, biotechnology and robotics and share the expertise worldwide and by unlocking our untapped start-up potential to run innovative ideas into new products and services. The breakthroughs and discoveries that I am confident will be made will enable the economic benefits to flow through the economy to everyday Queenslanders, creating new, additional jobs. I am pleased to say that the Advance Queensland policy has been warmly welcomed by all stakeholders and the business community. The policy includes the \$50 million Advance Queensland Best and Brightest Fund, the \$46 million Advance Queensland Future Jobs Strategy and the \$76 million Business Investment Attraction package.

I have seen firsthand the hardship and dire struggles in our hinterland and our regions. My government has heeded the pleas of the mayors in the outback. Nearly \$5 billion will be spent in the regions over the next four years, and \$200 million is brought forward to deliver critical infrastructure and create jobs. We have also committed \$52 million for drought relief measures.

Our \$10 billion infrastructure spend in this budget will support 27,500 full-time jobs and includes \$500 million in new funding for new schools, mainly focused on education maintenance and hospital refurbishments. These are all local projects supporting local jobs. Those are jobs for carpenters, plumbers, electricians, painters and other tradies. Nearly \$4 billion has been allocated for roads and transport projects.

I make no apology for repeating that job creation and job protection is at the heart of what this government is about. Our Working Queensland program will nurture and assist the right conditions for growing jobs and kick-starting new businesses. Skilling Queenslanders for Work is a key priority of this initiative. We will provide \$240 million over four years getting up to 32,000 Queenslanders back into meaningful work and boosting their skills. To plan for the workforce of tomorrow, my government will establish Jobs Queensland, providing \$40 million over four years for an independent statutory authority to provide us with the advice on skills demand and long-term workforce needs.

My government will invest \$34.5 million over four years to restore our TAFE system to its rightful place as a premier provider of vocational education and training in Queensland. We will quickly restore TAFE's reputation as a quality training provider by establishing an independent training ombudsman to investigate complaints made by students and apprentices. To encourage our employers to hire more apprentices and trainees there is a payroll tax rebate of 25 per cent on their sign-on wages. In addition, their wages will be exempt from payroll tax up to 30 June 2018. This incentive comes with a commitment of \$45 million over the next three years.

Health expenditure rises by over four per cent this financial year to a record \$14.2 billion and in education, a record spend of \$12.4 billion, up over seven per cent this year, is central to shaping our future. An amount of \$248 million will be outlaid over four years to employ 875 more teachers, including 275 specialist high school teachers and over \$14 million has been budgeted to hire an additional 45 guidance officers.

My government is determinedly committed to reducing the devastating effects of domestic and family violence. We have allocated \$31.3 million over four years to addressing the devastating consequences of DV. This includes two much needed 72-hour crisis shelters for women in Brisbane and Townsville at a cost of nearly \$20 million over four years.

A strong tourism sector is vital to Queensland's economy and this budget restores the previous government's cuts, providing much needed funding certainty. An amount of \$400 million will be dedicated to tourism and events over the next four years to drive growth. We have an additional \$100 million over five years to protect our tourism icon, the most priceless natural asset, the Great Barrier Reef.

My government's first budget also delivered for my electorate of Inala with a heavy focus on education. I am very proud to represent the people of Inala in the Legislative Assembly. It delivers \$2.2 million to construct an early years centre at Serviceton South State School and \$2.7 million for a trades skills centre at Glenala State School that will be used by students from surrounding schools. Additionally, there is \$1.4 million for local service providers to ensure children in need of protection have a safe place to stay, including funding for foster and kinship care and residential centres.

In conclusion, my government's first budget sets the right course for Queensland to again become the pace-setting state for economic growth. Despite fearmongering from those opposite, our valuable public servants' superannuation and all of their entitlements are safe and they are protected. My government's first budget reflects the Treasurer's measured, responsible approach to balancing the books and charts a prosperous way forward. It will get Queenslanders back to work. It will initiate jobs for the future. It will restore growth and optimism. It will greatly advance Queensland. It will boost confidence in our state. It is the better way. It is the Labor way. I take great pleasure in commending the bills to this House.