




Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2015

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (10.00 pm): I rise in the House today to speak in favour of the first budget of the Palaszczuk Labor government handed down by the Treasurer on Tuesday. I congratulate the Treasurer on a real Labor budget—one which will grow jobs now and jobs for the future in Keppel and across Queensland.

During the 14 months I campaigned as Labor's candidate for Keppel between 2013 and 2015, locals all over Keppel told me about five issues most important to them: health, education, jobs, asset sales and the Great Barrier Reef. The community was concerned about the 194 full-time jobs the LNP cut at our local hospitals. Some 194 nurses, doctors, health professionals and administration staff who delivered babies, treated sick local people and worked to promote health and wellbeing across our great region—gone. Nurses reported being spread too thin, working long shifts and overtime and not having enough nurses available to cover those who were sick. One nurse told me that they were so run off their feet that they struggled to even get to the bathroom on a normal shift.

Local people were concerned about our schools. Teachers were also being spread too thin. There were oversized classes and teachers told me they lacked administrative support. Parents told me they were concerned about the declining amount of one-on-one time their children were getting with their teacher because of the growing class sizes.

The issue of unemployment and growing jobs in our region was another important issue that local people raised, and continue to raise, with me. The unemployed talked to me with desperation in their eyes—desperation for a job. Young people told me about how difficult it was for them to find a job or an apprenticeship. Tradesmen told me of their struggle to find work.

Public servants told me horror stories about the 'box man'. A mysterious man, whom they had never seen before, would walk into their workplace with an empty cardboard box, creep up behind them, tap them on the shoulder and quietly break the news that they no longer had a job in the Queensland government. 'Pack your box with your belongings and leave,' they were told. For public servants sacked by the LNP it was a nightmare they longed to wake up from. Fear across the public service was rampant.

The Great Barrier Reef is the beating heart of the Keppel electorate, and locals told me that they want to protect it for our future generations and for the local jobs the reef supports. Last but not least, local people said that they do not want their assets sold.

This budget is a budget that delivers solutions to all of those issues locals raised with me. It provides for a record spend in education—with nine new full-time teachers, a new full-time guidance officer and new classrooms at local schools in Keppel. It includes \$6.5 million to complete the final stages of the intensive care unit at the Rockhampton Hospital. It includes more nurses and a legislated nurse-to-patient ratio—a commitment which I know local nurses are celebrating.

The \$180 million Advance Queensland program will be a catalyst for nurturing the knowledge based jobs of the future. Central Queensland is ready and open for business and we want to take advantage of any opportunity that the Advance Queensland program will present, to create jobs now and jobs for our future.

The budget also includes an additional \$100 million to protect our Great Barrier Reef. The budget delivers solutions to all of those issues locals raised with me without selling assets. This budget delivers for Queensland, this budget delivers for Central Queensland and this budget delivers for Keppel.

Since Tuesday I have received dozens of messages of support and congratulations to the government on handing down a budget which recognises Central Queensland as an important economic powerhouse of this state. Under the LNP we were forgotten. That was why I ran for parliament. I was sick and tired of those opposite cutting, culling, forgetting, neglecting, ignoring, slashing and burning Keppel.

Friday, 20 February 2015 was a harrowing day for Central Queenslanders. I have talked in this place many times about the devastating impact of Tropical Cyclone Marcia. It is incredibly disappointing that I cannot recall the member for Callide ever mentioning in this place the impact of Tropical Cyclone Marcia on his community. I know that the people of Banana endured a harrowing experience too.

Councils that were hardest hit, like the councils in Keppel, Livingstone shire and Rockhampton regional councils, identified important infrastructure projects that would assist in their recovery and the state subsequently sought \$198 million of support from the federal government for joint category D funding on a 50-50 basis with the state. But the Abbott government showed its true colours when it comes to supporting regional Queensland, approving a measly \$27.75 million—absolutely nothing compared to the \$198 million needed to get Central Queensland back on its feet.

Tony Abbott had the gall to say that the overall impact of Tropical Cyclone Marcia was ‘not of an exceptional nature compared to Tropical Cyclone Oswald or Yasi’. His words are a real slap in the face to local families and businesses that had their lives torn apart by an extreme natural disaster.

I am proud, however, that the Palaszczuk government is standing up to fill this critical local need with funding for a \$40 million disaster recovery package, including \$25 million for the Yeppoon foreshore revitalisation and \$15 million for the Rockhampton riverbank redevelopment. This \$40 million announcement is the start of big things for Central Queensland. It is history in the making.

Unlike the Abbott government, the Palaszczuk Labor government will not abandon our communities on the road to recovery. The physical recovery after a cyclone is one aspect of recovery, but the emotional recovery can be just as important. Seeing important elements of the community rebuilt, such as the foreshore and the riverbank, will deliver a cash injection to the local economy and boost community morale.

The Yeppoon foreshore and the Rockhampton riverbank are both spectacular community spaces, where I have many fond memories as a little girl growing up in Central Queensland. For a long time our local councils and communities have had dreams of grandeur for these places. The Palaszczuk Labor government’s investment in the foreshore and riverbank will transform these spaces into two stunning showpieces of our region—both places where families can enjoy quality time together; where locals will relax and meet for coffee; business colleagues can network; and tourists can ponder our region’s wondrous history. Both will be places the people of Rockhampton and Livingstone can all be proud of.

The Mayor of Livingstone Shire Council, Bill Ludwig, said the funding announcement for the Yeppoon foreshore is a game changer. The Mayor of Rockhampton Regional Council, Margaret Strelow, said the Rockhampton riverbank redevelopment funding announcement is the start of the city’s renaissance. This budget is good for Queensland and it is good for Keppel. I commend these bills to the House.