




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (7.30 pm): If the Queensland budget was a musical it would sound a bit like Redfoo's *Let's Get Ridiculous*. Treasurer Curtis Pitt may not have the fro of Redfoo, but he has some tricky economic moves and his budget just shouts out, 'Ridiculous!' That is probably the last time I am going to put Redfoo and Treasurer Curtis Pitt in the same sentence, but the song is just so apt and it does describe this budget.

It is ridiculous to simply shift debt from one credit card to another and pretend that it is a debt reduction strategy. It is ridiculous for the government to raid the public servants' entitlements and then say that it does not matter because we should trust them to pay it back in the future. Yeah, right—just like they promised previously to restore Queensland's AAA credit rating after they lost it. It is ridiculous to load up more debt against the state's energy assets and say that it will not hurt everyday Queenslanders who pay the power bills.

Premier Palaszczuk has failed her own mantra of integrity and honesty because she did not tell Queenslanders that she was going to do this at the time she went to the ballot box in January. In fact, the Premier and her Treasurer have not used the economic measures that they said they would use and the ones that they are putting in place in this budget they did not reveal; they kept them secret during the election campaign. The Premier and her Treasurer have failed to be completely up-front and the measures they are applying with their current debt and spending appetite are reckless and unsustainable. Regarding the \$3.4 billion raid on public servants' long service leave, an article in the *Australian* newspaper said—

This sort of behaviour would cause a company director to be disbarred.

Even the worst Labor treasurers of the past have never gone as far as to raid these public servants' entitlements. These pots of money are not consolidated revenue; they are the legal entitlements of public servants. It is their money. It does not belong to the Treasurer to use as his personal cookie jar to raid. Touch this and the government is spending other people's money. Spend it and taxpayers still have to fund it in the future. The problem is that when governments get addicted to spending other people's money without a plan to live within their means, to fix their spending habits or to repay existing debts, then the poor old taxpayers have to pay it back at a premium.

I mentioned that this budget's financial strategies were ridiculous. Then I realised I was still giving this government just a tad too much credit by assuming that they thought their strategy was a serious blueprint for the future. No, this strategy is far more cynical than the rhetoric that we have heard from the government. This is a budget for a government on a knife edge which does not know if it is going full term. Senior members of the Palaszczuk government have admitted to me that they did not know if they were going to go the distance.

Government members: Name!

Ms SIMPSON: This explains why this is not a budget for the future. It is a stopgap budget. I do not think members opposite would like me to name some of those members. The concern is that this is a stopgap budget that is too risky a financial strategy to keep repeating, particularly at a time when the ratings agencies are watching. This marginal Labor government is governing to get by, not governing for the future, due to its circus of problem backbenchers, not to mention the frontbenchers, while relying on Independents and, of course, being indentured to the union officials who control more of the cabinet than the Premier does. If the song *Let's Get Ridiculous* is the budget anthem, then the movie which best describes the Palaszczuk government's last six months is *Frozen*, considering their infrastructure freeze. Mind you, with the weather today we have probably all been frozen with the snow in Queensland. The government cannot control the weather but they can control the infrastructure build, how they do it and how they ensure it is sustainable and is done effectively.

For most of the first 100 days of the Palaszczuk government the ministers did not have charter letters, in other words, their to-do list from the Premier. If that was not shocking enough, there would seem to be no comprehension that that was an issue. The lack of direction within that first 100 days is now evident in the budget papers. Business was saying that nothing was happening from this government, they could not get in the door, the ministers were too busy and they did not know what their plan was for government. In this budget we now see that that infrastructure freeze meant that there has actually been a downturn in the number of Transport and Main Roads projects that were commenced within the performance standard. Under the LNP's last full year in office, 90 per cent of Transport and Main Roads projects commenced within four months of their scheduled commencement. After six months of Labor, this slipped down to 73 per cent. This is an example of the infrastructure freeze that the Palaszczuk government put in place. I know the main roads minister tried to weasel—rather, Twitter—his way out of this performance measure, but it happened on this government's watch. The LNP legacy from the last full financial year was 90 per cent and this fell to 73 per cent of projects starting on time. The percentage of projects that were completed 10 per cent over time has increased from 10 per cent under the LNP to 15 per cent in this budget.

Labor has failed to fund any major new infrastructure, instead claiming credit for projects started and funded by the LNP, including many projects along the Bruce Highway. Recently I was pleased to be able to do a road trip along the Bruce Highway by truck and see the 10-year action plan underway. I commend our federal colleagues, who have appropriately tipped in the can for this highway project. It is making a difference, but we all know that when a road is 1,700 kilometres long there is a lot more to be done. We will continue to apply pressure to see this action plan and the additional projects across the state brought to fruition. In relation to the projects along the Bruce Highway, there was \$700 million in last year's budget. The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing was an LNP initiative, which we are delighted to see getting underway, and again I acknowledge our federal colleagues. The Gateway Motorway North upgrade is another desperately needed piece of infrastructure that the LNP got underway. Despite Labor's criticism of the LNP's priority, this budget shows that they are largely continuing the projects that we started without a clear framework of the new projects that need to be brought on. We have not seen this government's infrastructure plan to date. The duplication of the Sunshine Coast rail line is an example of that. At the last election the LNP clearly enunciated that this was a priority piece of infrastructure. We outlined our plan. I will table an article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily* from yesterday titled 'Commuter fury after another fruitless budget', which is damning of this government for not taking action with regard to the duplication.

Tabled paper. Article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, dated 16 July 2015, titled 'Commuter fury after another fruitless budget' [834].

The RACQ came out in support of the policy to duplicate the rail line to the Sunshine Coast. Why would a road action lobby group be active in the space of rail upgrade advocacy? It was because of the amount of traffic that is on the Bruce Highway that should, and can, be shifted to an effective rail system. We need the Bruce Highway upgraded, but rail duplication is also vitally important.

I wish to acknowledge our federal colleagues with respect to the upgrade of the Bruce Highway from Caloundra Road to the Sunshine Motorway. When I looked at the budget I realised that, compared to QTRIP last year, on first blush it looks like there is less money being spent this year. But it is still budgeted for this overall section of the Bruce Highway to go ahead, because our federal colleagues have agreed to ensure that both stages 1 and 2 are completed together, I understand, in 2019. This rephrasing of funding is to achieve efficiencies by constructing stages 1 and 2 at the same time. Stage 1 was to be completed in 2018, but the revised funding arrangements now allow for stages 1 and 2 to both be completed in 2019. Stage 2 was originally meant to be completed later on. I commend our federal colleagues. This is a step in the right direction. But as we know, the pressure and the need to keep on funding the Bruce—and many other pieces of road infrastructure—is vitally important.

The other piece of road infrastructure on the Sunshine Coast that I wish to mention, as my colleagues from the Sunshine Coast have also flagged, is the access road to the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital. There is no plan from this Labor government to provide it, and that is a critical piece of infrastructure for access to the hospital and also to ensure that sections of the Nicklin Way, which can carry up to 60,000 vehicles a day, do not continue to be so choked that people are caught in unbearable congestion and, in a worst-case scenario, may not be able to get to the hospital in time.

I was most concerned to see the apparent axing by this government of the Safe Night Out Strategy. On the Sunshine Coast we love to have tourists and locals go out and have a good time while remaining safe. The busiest taxi rank in the whole of the Sunshine Coast is at Maroochydore. The issue with the Sunshine Coast is that it is very spread out. It is a collection of many communities with a population of between 320,000 to 330,000. It is the size of a city but it is spread out. Maroochydore has a burgeoning entertainment area and to see this strategy scrapped is, I believe, a backwards step. We had good buy-in from the community and the licensees who had been involved, and I am most concerned that what they have asked for and what they believe is necessary to keep it a safe precinct under these Safe Night Out strategies has been lost. I would urge the government to rethink this.

We have had a 1 am lockout for years with three o'clock closings, and there has been support for that mechanism in our community. I know the issue of how late licences go is contentious. The critical factor is that we have to have the funding and the multidisciplinary approach to ensure that the police, the licensees, the community and all of the organisations are working together and that we have backup support with CCTV and the ability to get people away by public transport and taxis as quickly as possible. The real concern is that this strategy being knocked on the head has left people in limbo.

I welcome increases in TIDS funding for local government in this context: the Labor government gives with one hand while taking away with the other. The criticism from local government has been that they are going to face extra costs with the way this government imposes IR changes against the wishes of local government, which they say could cost up to 1,500 jobs across Queensland. On one hand you kick them in the head, and on the other you throw a few pieces of silver and say, 'Like it or lump it.' I do not think that is the way that local government should be developed and enabled to be locally sustainable and able to effectively respond to the needs of their local community, local employees and the people who pay the bills: the ratepayers.

With regard to disaster relief and reconstruction, I wish to acknowledge all those who have been involved in recent years in this vital area of helping rebuild people's lives. These hardworking men and women, who process disaster relief for Queenslanders at their most vulnerable after being hit by the full force of nature, are now facing staff cuts. In their hour of need, Queenslanders will be waiting longer. This government may think that is okay; we do not. The fact that disaster payment targets and their on time performance measure is going to drop under this government is not good enough. Under the LNP we saw that 97 per cent of disaster payments were processed on time. This government is dropping that down to 80 per cent, and I think that is a shame. It will put extra pressure on people when they are most vulnerable.

The challenge of infrastructure is not met by the budget that we are debating tonight. There are measures that were begun by the LNP with regard to school maintenance and the ability for local schools to be able to manage their local budget, which was a wonderful initiative by my colleague the honourable John-Paul Langbroek, member for Surfers Paradise and deputy opposition leader. We support the ability of local communities to be active in the space of managing their destiny, and schools are certainly a strong part of that. The maintenance program was one that we put in place.

There is so much more that this government is losing the opportunity to do because they have no plan to address the debt crisis in Queensland. Ultimately, all Queenslanders will pay for that. In closing, this is a budget to get by rather than to build. It has no plan to address the state's shaky credit rating and thus no plan to build the infrastructure of the future, let alone pay off the dud infrastructure built by the Bligh Labor government while the current Premier and her Treasurer were pulling ministerial pay packets.

We all celebrate Queensland's wins on the sporting field, but when you look at what is happening in New South Wales we are losing the State of Origin with regard to economic drivers. I am proud of what this state is capable of. I want to see it fulfil its potential for Queenslanders who want to live here, raise their families here, see them educated here and build their businesses here. The crying shame is that we are seeing business confidence building south of the border and not in Queensland because this government does not have a plan to get the fundamentals right. This is a 'get by' budget, not a budget that builds for the future.