




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.47 pm): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill, my first one as the member for Gregory.

**Mr Pearce:** Good on you, mate.

**Mr MILLAR:** Thank you. The budget is one of tricks and raids and proves once and for all that the Labor Party has no plan for Queensland. It is smoke and mirrors. What it fails to fundamentally achieve is to pay down any debt and reduce the debt burden built up by the former Beattie-Bligh-Fraser Labor governments. It is history repeating itself. What we have is a Labor government that is making it up on the run. How can those opposite sit here and say that they have a plan to reduce debt when all they are doing is moving debt to government owned corporations? That is like shifting your current credit card debt to another credit card. Guess what? You still have debt. It feels good for a little bit, but you still have debt. Coming from an agriculture background, we deal with debt on a daily basis but rarely would we see a farmer shift debt to another credit card and say, 'Well, that's all fixed. We don't have debt anymore. It's all gone. I'll put it on another credit card. The crop has failed, the drought's got us, we're in debt. Here's a good idea: I'll head into the bank, fill out one of those long credit card forms, slip that in and get a brand-new credit card and debt fixed.' Thank God the Labor government does not operate a farm! I do not think the drought will get you; I think it will be your financial management that will send you down the gurgler. But the sad reality is that it will be everyday Queenslanders who will feel the impact. My disappointment with the Palaszczuk government's first budget is a lack of funding and real commitments to Central and Western Queensland. The seat of Gregory is 330,000 square kilometres and covers the Mitchell grass, gidgee and mulga country in the west and south-west and has what I call the best grazing land in the state in the very productive black soil and brigalow country in the east, including the golden triangle and the Emerald irrigation area. It also has what I call Queensland tourism's jewel in the crown—outback tourism in the west—and the resource rich coal from the Bowen Basin in the east.

As members can see, the seat of Gregory is a very powerful economic generator of the state of Queensland and for the Queensland government. But the Labor Party's first budget seems to have forgotten the people who live west of the range—people who live in the regions away from the coast, away from the south-east. We only have to look at the capital works projects for education and training to see that not one cent is being spent on any school in the electorate of Gregory—not one cent.

**Mr Rickuss:** How many schools have you got?

**Mr MILLAR:** We have 57 primary and high schools in the seat of Gregory. They are great schools educating tomorrow's doctors, nurses, accountants, auto-electricians, plumbers. They are great students—

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** I rise to a point of order.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order, member for Toowoomba North. Member for Logan, I reminded you yesterday that the standing orders of this House require that if you wish to interject you must be sitting in your own seat.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Lockyer, I do not need your assistance.

**Mr MILLAR:** Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you. For the benefit of the member for Logan, yes, there are great students there who, like many before them, will carry on making sure that the seat of Gregory continues to be one of the economic generators of the state, paying its taxes, paying its royalties to the state's coffers.

So you would think that the Labor government could find some capital works for those important schools—maybe to add some more classrooms? An undercover area for sport? But it seems no. So I call on the Minister for Education to join me in my electorate. I am happy to take her to some of the schools in my electorate, including the Blackwater, Capella, Clermont and Emerald schools and schools in the west of my electorate such as the Jericho, Alpha, Barcaldine, Blackall, Longreach, Ilfracombe, Jundah, Quilpie and Windorah schools and even the school of distance education.

**Mr Stewart:** Springsure.

**Mr MILLAR:** And Springsure. Absolutely. I take that interjection from the member for Townsville. He is a former teacher at Springsure and he is certainly passionate about Springsure. So I take that interjection.

The Palaszczuk government's first budget is full of reannouncements of the LNP's commitments, including funding for the Alpha community hospital and road funding for the Blackwater-Rolleston Road and the Tambo-Springsure Road. These funding announcements were fully costed and funded by the previous LNP government. Until now, the only question was whether those projects would fall victim to Labor's redirection of funds to the south-east.

A classic example of Labor trying to claim credit for something that was announced by the LNP government is the Alpha community hospital, which was announced five months ago by the LNP in the state election campaign. Although I welcome this funding, which the community needs, it is disappointing that, despite the fact that the funding was in place, it has taken so long for the Labor Party to commit to this project.

Unfortunately, the news is not all good. Blackwater Hospital urgently needs upgrading. The LNP had committed to funding \$300,000 towards this upgrade. I also cannot see line items for funding that had been announced but which have now disappeared. There was \$27.5 million for projects in the mining communities and a promised \$7.5 million for funding for remote communities.

I will give credit where credit is due. I thank the government and the Minister for Agriculture for continuing to commit to DRAS funding—\$40 million for this financial year and I think it is over \$50 million over the next three financial years. That funding is so desperately needed. As we now have our third failed wet season, we desperately need that funding. In saying that, I would also like to acknowledge the former minister for agriculture, John McVeigh, who committed nearly \$100 million DRAS over three years. I remember when the drought started in the north when the gulf fires ripped through the savanna basalt country in the cape in December 2012. The member for Toowoomba South, then the minister for agriculture, was straight up to that area to visit graziers and kick-start the funding so that they could buy bales to keep breeders alive. So I acknowledge the efforts of the current Minister for Agriculture, who has continued to travel through drought affected areas and who continues to make sure that government support is available. I would also like to acknowledge the shadow minister for agriculture, the member for Nanango, Deb Frecklington, who has also made many visits to the electorate of Gregory and all over the state to make sure that drought and the impact that it is having on graziers and small businesses in the west is heard loud and clear.

But I have to ask the current Premier and the Minister for Agriculture: what happened to the wild dog funding that the government promised to fast-track when the Premier visited my electorate earlier this year? It has been well over two months now. All I see is glossy brochures spruiking the budget and that there is \$5 million for the wild dog and cat population to protect Queensland's agriculture. I am not quite sure if the minister or even the Premier understands that we do not really have a cat problem out in the central west; we have a wild dog problem. I have not found anything in the budget documents to say that there is fast-tracking of that funding. Where is that funding? On behalf of the people in the west, I ask the Premier and the minister to fast-track that funding now—not tomorrow, not next week; today. We need it today. They promised it. How about delivering it.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr MILLAR:** I take that interjection. I look forward to it. In May at Camden Park in Longreach the federal drought package was announced. There was \$10 million for pest and weeds, with a priority for drought affected areas such as Queensland. So federal funds are now available. The state government has to put in its share and administer the funds. So the Labor government needs to write back to the federal Minister for Agriculture so that we can get this going. Wild dogs are causing a major economic production loss for our woolgrowers and it is having an impact on our beef producers. Pest and weed funding is a priority for fencing—that is post and wires. This funding will provide jobs for local people in drought affected areas. This assistance is about buying locally and employing locally. That is what this funding will do. I cannot stress enough that we need the agreement fast-tracked so that we can start work. Time is of the essence. The state government needs to get the department to move now. An amount of \$10 million is sitting there. Barnaby wants to sign the cheque, but he cannot if the Queensland government is dragging its heels.

I turn now to roads and, again, give credit where credit is due. I also welcome the \$40 million over two years for the Western Roads Upgrade Program and the \$12.1 million for the Outback Way. I thank the government for that. Road funding is a major employer for Western Queensland towns and partnering with local councils is the best way to provide that employment. But can we make sure that the work is carried out by locals, including local councils and local contractors—not contractors from the south-east? The money from this road funding needs to stay in the west and it needs to be used to employ people in the west.

I am also grateful for the \$3.4 million for our agricultural colleges, the Longreach Pastoral College and the Emerald Agricultural College. Along with the resource sector, agriculture is the lifeblood and the economic generator of my region. The Labor Party has been quick to stipulate the increase in the number of Public Service jobs, but it will not say that it cut 130 positions from the department of agriculture. That is not surprising because, when it was last in power, the Labor Party did not even have a department of agriculture. It was sucked up into a super department called DEEDI. Yes, the last time the Labor Party was in power it did not even have a department of agriculture. It did not think that agriculture deserved to have a department dedicated to protecting our valuable resources through biosecurity, increasing our yields and crops and growth rates of beef through research and development. It was the LNP, under former minister John McVeigh, that had to rebuild the department from scratch. John McVeigh walked into 80 Ann Street and had to put the department together. He had to bring it back and get it going again in the right direction.

Finally, this budget has fallen well short of providing a secure direction for Queensland. It does not pay down debt. In fact, Queensland is going to creep back to being \$78 billion in debt. Standard & Poor's and Moody's say that Queensland will not regain its AAA rating with this budget. That means more money wasted on paying the interest bill. That is more money that we could have put towards more front-line services. But, no, it is a budget full of glossy brochures, pictures of the Treasurer with hard hats and fancy pie charts. Yes, it is a typical Labor budget: full of spin and with very little substance.