




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

Record of Proceedings, 17 July 2015

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (10.38 pm): It is quite something to be lectured by the former deputy premier, a man who will now be spending 17 out of 20 years in opposition, lecturing us and telling us about how we should be running this state. I look forward to more contributions along those lines.

First of all, I congratulate the Treasurer, Curtis Pitt, on bringing down the Palaszczuk government's first budget. The budget the Treasurer delivered in this place on Tuesday was a defining moment in the first term of the Queensland Labor government which was elected earlier this year. It establishes a better way than the privatisation push the former LNP government planned for the people of Queensland. It is a budget that has formally buried their plan to sell off Queensland's public assets and was a judgement on their broken promises, their arrogant swagger and their cost-of-living failures. It is a budget that demonstrated that there is an alternative to selling off public assets and that Queensland does not need to go down that ideological path.

It is a vanilla budget. It is a bread and butter budget, and it is a health and education budget. It is a budget that establishes this Labor government's priorities: jobs now and jobs for the future; opportunities through health, education, renewable energy, protecting our environment, skills and training, and rural and regional Queensland; working with business, working with communities and supporting our front-line staff; police, our ambulance and emergency services; boosting tourism at a time when the Australian dollar is coming down and making that market more attractive for international tourists; growing our economy; importantly, meeting our election commitments, which is something the last government did not do; and, last but certainly not least, reducing the general government debt and delivering a budget surplus and lining up fiscal surplus after surplus after surplus, something the LNP failed to do in three years. This budget outlines \$6.9 billion worth of surpluses accumulating over the forwards.

In framing this budget, the Palaszczuk government had four key objectives for the Queensland community: creating jobs and a diverse economy; bolstering our front-line services; protecting our environment; and building safe, caring and connected communities, not attacking them. In this budget, we have seen expenditure on education, the pathway to opportunity for people, increase by 7.2 per cent. We have seen our health budget rebound, up four per cent, after 1,500 nurses and midwives were sacked by the previous government. We have seen the Advance Queensland plan, with \$180 million of support for skills, for innovation to diversify our economy, for business development, and, importantly, to grow renewable energy jobs—jobs that were lost under the previous government. We lost 1,300 jobs under your lot in the last three years in the renewable energy sector. Other states were growing jobs, with \$6.5 billion worth of investments in South Australia, and meanwhile we are stuck back in the 20th century.

Under the five months of the Palaszczuk government, we have seen unemployment drop already to 6.1 per cent, with 23,100 jobs created. This is in stark contrast to losing six jobs every day under the previous government. We have seen the cost of living come under control. We saw double digit increases in electricity prices year in year out under the LNP, and they are now down to an average reduction of 0.5 per cent in Queensland. This is a welcome relief for Queenslanders. We have seen electricity prices for small businesses fall between 1.7 and 3.5 per cent on average—a reduction of between \$73 and \$135 per year. This government supports small business. We have seen electricity prices for farmers at zero per cent this year, after going up 10 per cent every year under the last LNP government—a government that allegedly supported farmers. We also see irrigators in the same position after constant double digit rises under the LNP, with a zero per cent increase this year, something that will be a welcome relief for them.

We see water in South-East Queensland coming under control also, with six councils having a reduction in bulk water prices and retail costs as well and very modest increases of one to two per cent at the retail end for the other five councils. Importantly, we see in this budget a re-gearing of the energy corporations to levels that are still below the commercial rates that are normal in this sector. We see the general government debt falling by \$5 billion this financial year, giving us interest savings of \$600 million over the forwards.

The opposition members are trying to allege that electricity prices will somehow go up because of this re-gearing. What they do not understand is that the government owned corporation's electricity prices already include of course the WACC, the weighted average cost of capital, which this year is 5.8 per cent. This covers all the capital, whether it is debt or equity, and it is well above the current debt costs. So the opposition attempts to distort, deceive and spread things in the community that are untrue and that are not based on anything that is remotely factual.

What we are also seeing from the opposition is a continued attempt to distort and try to spread fear in the community by trying to misrepresent the situation around long service leave. There are two simple words when it comes to the adjustments in the budget on long service leave—fully funded. When we look at the super situation in terms of the defined benefit scheme, it is fully funded. Let me say that again: fully funded. To see the opposition running around trying to scare people that the Armageddon is going to come is really quite pathetic. It reminds me of Malcolm Fraser telling people to hide their money under the beds back when Bob Hawke was running for Prime Minister. It has that sniff of desperation about it. If the opposition developed policy rather than fear, they might actually understand why they are on that side of the chamber.

This is a very good budget for my local constituency in Yeerongpilly. I am very proud of these highlights: \$107,000 for the Salisbury C&K kindergarten; \$184,000 to renovate the multiuse hall in one of our best public schools on the south side, the Wellers Hill State School; \$1.19 million to ensure children in need of protection have a safe place to stay in Yeerongpilly, including funding for foster care, intensive foster care and residential care services; \$12.8 million to assist people living with a disability and their families to access the support and services they need; \$15 million for the netball centre at Nathan in my electorate to house the Firebirds and, importantly, Queensland netball; and boosts to nurses and teachers, and these are very welcome after the savage cutbacks under the previous government.

I turn my attention now to the comments on the budget made by the opposition leader and a number of his MPs who repeated by rote various phrases from their key lines and themes document. The opposition leader complained that there were no major infrastructure projects that were not planned or were not already being completed under the defeated LNP Newman-Springborg government. This budget certainly includes a number of new important infrastructure projects which were not planned under the previous government, and the \$160 million roads package on the Gold Coast to support the Commonwealth Games certainly comes to mind. This is something the Gold Coast community will value. There might be a lot of LNP members on the Gold Coast but they have not delivered very much over time, and certainly not in the last three years. If we look at the Labor record on the Gold Coast, we can see that it is very strong—whether it is the Gold Coast university hospital, the Commonwealth Games, the M1 or a range of other infrastructure measures. In this budget, we have \$40 million for the western roads upgrade program, \$5 million for the Yarrabah jetty and \$5 million for the sealing works on the Upper Barron Road, something which was ignored by the LNP for three years.

The western roads package is a very important new program. It acknowledges the very difficult circumstances that Queenslanders in Western Queensland are suffering with the drought. It is designed to support those communities out there. They deserve that support, they are doing it very tough and we

are supporting them. I acknowledge the supportive comments made by the member for Mount Isa earlier on this package. It is indeed an important and good package for people who really need it at this time.

I might add that there is nothing unusual or controversial about continuing road and transport projects that are worthy, and this government continues to do that in this budget. That is something the previous government did also. However, what we do see is a bewildered opposition which still does not know what hit them on 31 January. We had the Deputy Leader of the Opposition lionising Terry Mackenroth, Peter Beattie, Andrew Fraser and people who came to this House and defeated them time and time again. The thing that comes to mind on this is the absence of conservative icons who come into the opposition debate. Where are the icons and the mentors that they use in this place? They have to resort to Labor ones. It is quite a sad state of affairs when it comes to the modern conservative parties here in Queensland.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition also comes into this place after having said only one month ago that he thought they had a great plan and he still thinks they had a great plan, that is, Strong Choices. However, the opposition leader says, 'We have a new plan here. We released this a few days ago.' What is it? Is it the old plan that he still thinks is a great plan, or is it the new plan? It is a little bit confusing when we see Senator O'Sullivan and Warren Truss, the Deputy Prime Minister, trying to force us to sell assets to get basic infrastructure in Queensland and we hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise, saying that he still thinks that Strong Choices is a great plan.

So I went to the new plan—not the old plan—and had a look at the so-called Real Economic Plan because I had heard they had added to the four pillars. I had heard that they had added knowledge based industries, a Labor policy, which was a good sign. So I thought I would have a look at their policy. Their policy says—

An LNP Government would grow a more diverse and resilient economy by focusing on five core priority areas to diversify and strengthen the economy ...

So I thought I would go through them and count them. We have agriculture, tourism, resources, construction—that is four—then we have manufacturing, but there is more. They have actually got services as No. 6 as well as knowledge based industries. So their five pillars are actually seven pillars. One has to wonder. If they cannot count to 10 then their ability to contribute in an intelligent way to the budget is rather difficult.

This budget is a strong contrast to last year's budget. In last year's budget those opposite tried to take away the concessions of pensioners throughout this state for rates, power and water bills. If ever there was anything that showed how out of touch with ordinary people they were, that was it. But it got worse. The former treasurer called those people who have solar panels on their roofs 'latte sippers' and 'champagne drinkers'. I do want to thank the member for Clayfield. I am sure that media article was letterboxed widely in my electorate. He certainly gained many votes for me out in the electorate. He is right on form.

Yesterday the member for Broadwater asserted in this House that I had cancelled the installation of flashing lights at Labrador State School and that I had scrapped funding for an intersection at the front of Coombabah State School. This is clearly not true. No funding was committed to the installation of flashing school zone lights at Labrador State School by the LNP under the Newman-Springborg government. It is the same for the \$1.5 million the member for Broadwater refers to as having for the intersection upgrade.

Miss Barton interjected.

Mr BAILEY: She does not like to hear the truth. It was never in QTRIP. It was an unfunded election commitment under the so-called Strong Choices plan, which the LNP no longer supports—supposedly. It was completely reliant on the sale of public assets.

These misleading statements were part of a concerning trend from those opposite. In June we saw a conga line of opposition MPs, led by the member for Caloundra and a few others, asking five questions on notice which were premised on an incorrect but rehearsed assertion that the LNP had a fully funded and costed allocation for particular school lights. I need to correct the record. Just because it is in the Strong Choices plan does not mean that it is funded within the departmental allocations. I am pleased to advise that—

Miss Barton interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! There is a little bit of audible conversation. Member for Broadwater, you have had a good go. We are nearly there. The minister has the call.

Mr BAILEY: I am pleased to advise the House that this budget provides the state funding component of the \$18.8 billion that will be invested in Queensland Transport infrastructure over the next four years under QTRIP. That is an increase of \$700 million over the forwards. QTRIP outlines roads, rail, marine, public transport and active transport infrastructure and will sustain almost 15,000 jobs over the same period. The overall QTRIP amount, \$14.9 billion, will be invested in roads, road safety and marine infrastructure. The Palaszczuk government recognises the importance of our safe and reliable road network.

The 2015-16 budget allocations in QTRIP include \$175 million for the Gateway North upgrade and \$172 million for the Toowoomba second range crossing. Both of those projects have more than 2,800 jobs to come online quite soon. We have the Cooroy to Curra upgrade on the Bruce Highway for \$113 million and the Yeppen flood plain for \$33 million. I know the member for Mirani will be happy to see \$12.9 million for the Peak Downs Highway.

I congratulate the member for Mackay on her very strong representations for the Vines Creek bridge. The contribution from the previous speaker for Whitsunday was not correct; this was never funded previously in departmental allocations. It is because of the representations of the member for Mackay to me over the last few months that we have \$274,000 to get that process underway. We will build both those bridges in conjunction with the Mackay ring-road, which is a natural economy of scale decision and is an appropriate use of public funds. That is another example of, 'I was going to do it in the last three years, but I didn't,' from the member for Whitsunday.

Before I veer into some energy areas, I would like to say that we have brought TIDS forward by a year to partner with local governments to get jobs going and get our road infrastructure going. It is popular with mayors all across this state who were very disappointed by the previous government. I will quote some of those mayors. Belinda Murphy from the McKinlay shire in the north-west of the state said that TIDS funding reinstatement brought forward is great news for roads and for local government. The Cloncurry acting mayor, Jane McMillan, said that the state budget's focus on local infrastructure to address local needs and create local jobs can only be a good thing for that shire. We also had praise from Robert Loughnan, the Maranoa mayor in the state's west. We also had Tony McGrady, although he probably has some Labor form.

We are acting to reduce the road toll in this budget. There is funding for the safety mass action plan. There is funding for the cycle networks that we believe are an important part of our road system. I am very pleased to see a cycleway on the Gateway North as well as the Moreton Bay Rail Link, which will be coming online soon, and the Brisbane North cycleway, which is the missing link that cyclists on the north side need. There are also a further 300 new flashing school zone signs across Queensland, a program started under the previous Labor government and the current Premier as the transport minister, not by the previous government as is constantly claimed by those opposite.

I will now make a couple of comments about energy and water. This year's budget invests \$518 million across energy and water. It supports our renewable energy platform. This is a government interested in the transformation to clean energy and for Queensland to benefit from that transformation. We will not be stuck in the 20th century like the previous government; we will work with industry to create jobs and maximise opportunities. One of the reasons those on that side were defeated is that they had no modern policy in terms of energy in this state. They were stuck in the 20th century.

We will continue to subsidise electricity so that everybody right across the state gets the same price. We will also be proceeding with our ethanol and biodiesel mandate to grow Queensland jobs and our regional economy. Importantly, we will also be providing \$2.5 million to support Queensland farmers battling drought conditions by providing relief from fixed charges for electricity accounts that are used to pump water for farm and irrigation purposes. This funding is part of the government's four-year \$52 million drought assistance package.

Our energy investments are substantial. There is \$2.4 billion in energy and water capital costs right across the state, most of it in regional Queensland.

Mr Pitt: Isn't there an infrastructure freeze?

Mr BAILEY: Apparently, there is an infrastructure freeze and yet we see \$2.4 billion going across the state, whether that is in Tarong, Toowoomba, Gladstone South or East Warwick. We see energy projects like the Torres Strait wind farm and the Doomadgee solar project. Callide A gets an upgrade. Paradise Dam gets an upgrade. The Mount Crosby water treatment plant gets an upgrade.

This is a budget for all of Queensland and yet we see the same old faces, the same old front bench on the other side. There are no new ideas from them. I commend this bill to the House. It is one that delivers on our election commitments and supports Queenslanders across the state.

(Time expired)