




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND  
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (7.30 pm): It is great to have an opportunity to rise to speak to this 2016-17 budget—a budget that has been aptly described by many on our side, but starting with the Leader of the Opposition and shadow Treasurer, as a budget of raids, rip-offs and write-downs. I do not particularly want to spend my contribution going into the detail of how bad the budget is and what it means for the state of Queensland, because I will be directing my constituents in the seat of Glass House to the contributions made by the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield, and the shadow Treasurer, the honourable Scott Emerson, the member for Indooroopilly.

Earlier this morning, when addressing the announcement by the Treasurer of an Industry Attraction Fund, the Leader of the Opposition referred to a comment made by a former chairman of the Productivity Commission, Mr Gary Banks, back in 2002. Although the Leader of the Opposition referred to that comment by Gary Banks in the context of the Industry Attraction Fund and the sort of economic foolishness that it is considered to be, I think a lot of what Gary Banks had to say is pertinent to the budget more widely. In a speech to CEDA in Brisbane, Gary Banks said the following—

If governments can agree to a truce on inter-State bidding wars and other selective corporate support—

a la the Industry Attraction Fund—

they can then concentrate their forces on a much more worthy and productive battle: improving further their economic governance, tax regimes, infrastructure and other service delivery. These are the real mainstays of the contribution of State and Territory Governments to economic performance in the long term.

If we set aside the fact that the Industry Attraction Fund is a form of interstate bidding, or selective corporate support, the other elements that Gary Banks raised are also pertinent to the budget. His suggestion was that a state government should focus on improving economic governance. Has the Treasurer and the Palaszczuk Labor government achieved that? No, definitely not. They have raided the defined benefit superannuation scheme. They have not only loaded the government owned corporations with debt and raided their dividends but also raided their cash reserves—and we all know where that is going to lead. In short, have the Treasurer and the Palaszczuk Labor government improved economic governance? Definitely not.

The next element referred to by Gary Banks was states improving their tax regimes. For many years Queensland has been a low tax state. That has attracted businesses and individuals to this fantastic state. Despite election promises to the contrary, in this budget we have seen an increase in taxes. One in particular, the foreign ownership transfer duty, is going to have a profound impact on not only foreign ownership of property but also the price of a house and land for mum-and-dad purchasers and investors in this state. Earlier today, the Property Council was able to demonstrate that.

The next element that Mr Banks raised was improving infrastructure. The government gets a big fat zero for that, too. I will come back to that shortly. Suffice to say less is being spent on infrastructure in this budget than there was in the final year of the LNP government. Less is being spent than even the Palaszczuk Labor government forecast itself.

The final aspect of the mainstays that a state government should be focusing on, according to Mr Banks, is improving service delivery. One would think that, if, as we have seen in this budget, the government continues to astronomically grow the Public Service, we may at least see improvements in service delivery. However, as was demonstrated by the shadow minister for police and corrective services this morning in his questioning of the minister about the situation in our correctional centres throughout the state, that is certainly not the case. As well, as we heard this morning from the questions asked by a number of members of the Minister for Health, our performance in Health is going backwards. In short, in what this government should be focusing on, it is failing on all accounts. The people of the Glass House electorate, the people of Queensland, need to understand that and need to understand that it will have dire consequences for not only this coming financial year but also many financial years into the future.

I turn to the portfolio areas of Transport and Main Roads and Local Government, particularly focusing on infrastructure, transport and main roads. Despite what the Palaszczuk Labor government has claimed over the past couple of days, this budget has certainly not thawed Labor's 18-month infrastructure freeze. The Palaszczuk Labor government continues to be a do-nothing government, asleep at the wheel. All we have seen in the Palaszczuk government's second disappointing budget is road upgrade projects across Queensland being deferred as it scrambles to fill its budget black hole. Important Bruce Highway upgrade projects up and down the coast have had funding delayed, including the Caloundra Road to Sunshine Coast Motorway upgrade—and I will talk about that a bit later—the Cooroy to Curra upgrade, the St Lawrence to Mackay upgrade and the Proserpine to Bowen upgrade. We have also seen a deferral and a shifting of funding for important safety upgrades along the Warrego Highway between Toowoomba and Dalby and the New England Highway between Warwick and Wallangarra. It is important to note that all of these projects started and were funded under the former LNP government. Labor continues to hand in our homework, albeit now extremely late, with nothing to show for itself.

In this budget, we have also seen capital spending cuts to Transport and Main Roads district budgets across the state, including \$7.3 million in Far North Queensland, \$40.5 million in the Fitzroy district—Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that is something near and dear to your heart—\$172,000 in the south-west district, and, whilst that might not sound a lot, we all know that that money can go a long way on roads in the south-west—and \$78 million from the north coast district budget, including the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay local government areas. That is simply not good enough. Regional Queenslanders deserve that investment. They deserve safer roads.

It is not just motorists who should be concerned. Of the more than \$10.5 million that was meant to be spent on cycling grants across the state in 2016-17, that amount has now been slashed by \$9 million. There are cycling grants that will not be going out in this coming financial year. In terms of boating infrastructure—and our coastal towns rely on upgrades to our infrastructure so that we can enjoy, both commercially and recreationally, our wonderful waterways—again, Labor, is spending \$3.5 million less in this budget.

If we look at some of the bigger ticket items, the biggest of all—although there is some confusion among the government members as to whether it is a priority—is Cross River Rail. The Palaszczuk Labor government has gone back to the drawing board. Commuters are right to be cross about Cross River Rail. Commuters would have to question whether Labor even wants to build Cross River Rail while it continues to push it into the never-never. Although the government has crowed about a \$50 million investment in setting up a new bureaucracy for the project, nothing will be built. The government has not even completed its business case. As a fan of the program *Utopia*, I can say that it is starting to sound increasingly like an episode of *Utopia*. I hope that, as this bureaucracy is set up, the government has someone representing Alpine and that someone makes sure they order the muffins. Otherwise, we could really be in trouble. Like an episode of *Utopia*, the Palaszczuk government is great at reviewing, delaying and setting up layers. They may even change a logo or two just to make sure they can buy themselves a bit more time. They love setting up layers of bureaucracy, but they fail when it comes to actually delivering.

What is even worse is that the Premier, her deputy and the Treasurer all seem to be at odds over Cross River Rail. On budget night the comments of the Treasurer Curtis Pitt were extremely disappointing because he was hopeful that Labor could continue to keep pushing the project out—

delaying, deferring and dithering. Referring to the European signalling system he said, 'That is the system we hope is going to potentially push back the delivery of Cross River Rail.' The Premier says Cross River Rail remains her No. 1 priority, but it sounds like the Treasurer is not altogether sure.

If we turn to another issue within the budget of the Department of Transport and Main Roads, last night Labor again refused to back down from its unfair rego hike on the family car. Labor's slug, as I said last night in the debate, would see Queensland families' rego go up by another 3½ per cent for the second year in a row. That is double the inflation rate for two years running. Labor is sticking with its only plan: to treat motorists as cash cows. On Wednesday the member for Murrumba admitted we would probably be back here next year while they defended their 3½ per cent increase for the 2017-18 budget. That would be a third 3½ per cent increase in a row.

Quite frankly, Queensland motorists are sick and tired of Labor using them to plug their budget black holes year after year after year. Families with a four-cylinder car will now pay over \$400 to register it—and that is before you add CTP and the transport levy. Queenslanders certainly deserve better. It is sounding very similar to the last four years of the Bligh Labor government, when car rego increased by 30 per cent. It really is only the LNP that has the track record of keeping costs low for Queensland families. We froze rego for the term of our office and, because we know running the family car is expensive, we have committed to keeping rego increases for the family vehicle to the inflation rate for our term in government so that Queenslanders get a fair go.

Turning to public transport, it is great to know finally that the transport minister agrees with me on how bad the Premier's legacy was when she was a minister. I feel obliged to educate some of the more naive Labor members. The then transport minister Anastacia Palaszczuk slugged commuters with endless 15 per cent public transport fare increases. Under her watch we saw patronage plummet as fares skyrocketed and trains did not even run on time. Labor are tricky and sneaky and so it is therefore unsurprising that Queenslanders are wary of the Palaszczuk government's fare changes. Make no mistake, the LNP supports lower fares for commuters, but it must be costed, it must be funded and it must be affordable.

The LNP has a strong record in making transport affordable. We were the ones who ended Anastacia Palaszczuk's 15 per cent increases and we also made the first ever five per cent fare decrease in the history of public transport fares in this state. Labor, on the other hand, is great at giving with one hand and taking with the other. This budget shows that the Palaszczuk government still has no way to fund its \$230 million public transport fare changes. It is a huge black hole in the middle of its budget. No money has been allocated towards this program. Ministers Hinchliffe and Bailey have been told to find \$102.8 million in savings from the department. They have not identified what programs or projects will be cut to meet that, but even when they find that money they will still have a shortfall of nearly \$130 million. Labor must immediately tell Queenslanders how the fare changes will be funded and be up-front about what services will be cut.

In the time remaining I would like to turn to the region of the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay and to the electorate of Glass House. We on the Sunshine Coast all know what our key infrastructure projects are. It is what I and my team of Sunshine Coast LNP colleagues have been working on now for more than six years and in some cases a lot longer than that. I welcome the news that the Sunshine Coast Airport has been given environmental approval. That was made possible because of the efforts of the LNP government to gift the land to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to make one contiguous block and allow the upgrade to proceed. It was an LNP government that funded the Kawana hospital, bringing forward funding that Labor had punted into the never-never. True to form, in this budget the opening has been delayed yet again. Sunshine Coast residents and, might I add, Moreton Bay residents, who have had to rely on an overcrowded Caboolture Hospital, are sick and tired of waiting for the Sunshine Coast University Hospital to be opened. We are now having to wait until April next year.

Whilst there was a promise of \$22 million for roundabouts around the hospital—they will not relieve the congestion, by the way—we have heard that they will not be in place for that opening in April. We will have a hospital but no-one will be able to get to it because of the congestion around it. What is more, there is no mention whatsoever about the very important Mooloolah River interchange, an interchange we committed to funding to the tune of \$400 million back in January 2015, one that we see no money allocated for in this financial year or any future financial year.

I mentioned the deferral of projects. One of those is the upgrade of the Bruce Highway between Caloundra Road and the Sunshine Coast Motorway. Whereas last year's QTRIP said that \$182 million would be spent in this coming financial year, this year's QTRIP shows that only \$47 million will be spent. That is a \$135 million miscalculation. That can only mean that the project is behind schedule and people on the Sunshine Coast will not be seeing those extra lanes soon. As for the north coast rail, something

very near and dear to my heart, we have \$2.3 million for another business case. I cannot tell you how well that is going down with my constituents! They are sick and tired of having information sessions on a business case. They do not want any more information sessions. They want to see the duplication rolling down that line. Back in January 2015 the LNP gave a commitment of \$530 million to this project. This government gives no allowance for it in this budget. The Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay region need more lanes, they need more trains, and this budget delivers neither. What is worse, even the lanes that were budgeted are now being delayed. It is simply not good enough.

In Glass House we had the wonderful announcement of the Maleny Police Station. It gives me a great opportunity to point out that it was not until 8 June that we finally got a media release out of the police minister about the Maleny Police Station. My media release went out on 22 April. That was picked up by the *Range News* on Thursday, 28 April and the *Glass House Country and Maleny News* on 27 April. In fact, before I put out my media release I was able to go and stand beside the Maleny Police Station and take a photo of the construction work that is underway. It is wonderful that the government has finally caught up with that great piece of infrastructure that only came about because of our good friend who is down in the Premier's and Speaker's Hall tonight, Mayor Jack Dempsey now, then police minister, who worked with me to bring forward that vital piece of infrastructure.

**Opposition members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr POWELL:** I take those interjections from my colleagues. He is a truly great former member for Bundaberg who will be a fantastic mayor for Bundaberg. They are very lucky to have him. Certainly people in Maleny and the surrounding districts are very pleased with his contribution to our public safety through that new facility being constructed.

In the QTRIP we see ongoing funding for the installation of lights at the Reed Street intersection with Steve Irwin Way. They are nearly completed. I am pleased to see the contractors will be paid for their work. We also saw funding for the Bowen Road-Steve Irwin Way intersection upgrade that will see traffic lights installed there. Again it is a project that is already underway but it is fantastic that it is continuing to be funded. Another project in the south of the electorate is the upgrade of the D'Aguilar Highway, a project fully funded by the federal government because a Labor government under a former Labor member for Glass House could not find the funding. I thank Wyatt Roy for that money and I thank the hard workers within the Department of Transport and Main Roads who are seeing that upgrade come about.

I will speak briefly about the Caboolture Hospital car park. After waiting nearly 18 months for this Labor government to come up with an announcement, it took the federal member for Longman, Wyatt Roy, to announce the \$2 million contribution of the federal government before the state government stumped up with a further \$4 million. It is great news for Caboolture: \$6 million will be spent on the hospital car park. That is a fantastic outcome. I look forward to those 300 car park spaces being built as soon as possible. That is long overdue, but it should not have been as the money was in the budget when we left government. We could have had that car park 18 months ago, but it has taken this budget to bring it about.

In the short time I have remaining I acknowledge the wonderful initiative announced by the Leader of the Opposition today, which is our plan to get Queensland working, with a particular focus on jobs for young Queenslanders. He announced that, if elected, an LNP government will implement our get Queensland working plan, along with our Queensland apprenticeship boost, tools for tradies—which is already going well on my social media this evening—our job-start incentive and unemployment bonus. I return to where I start: what state governments should and must do is improve economic governance, improve their tax regimes, improve infrastructure and improve service delivery. There is only one party in this House that has a track record of achieving that and that promises to do it again, and that is the LNP. I do not support this lousy Labor budget.