




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.03 pm): With the 2016-17 Queensland budget we have again seen comments that are vague and mostly seem contradictory. The smoke and mirrors plan seems to have a couple of main elements or thought bubbles—inject funds from Queensland public servants' defined benefit fund into government owned corporations to seek project finance from the private sector and to continue to spend like only Labor can with no plan for the future. There are many speaking out about the raid on superannuation funds, and the Future Fund just posted its first negative quarter of performance in almost four years. With the discussions around poor investment outlook, especially here in Queensland, one would wonder with all these challenges facing the superannuation sector why this government would raid the capital of the state's defined benefit fund to plug an ever-increasing black hole in its budget.

The reality is that this budget delivers very little for the Bundaberg region and next to nothing for those hardworking men and women of the Burnett. Employment growth is down, jobs are drying up in the region through significant lack of confidence and unemployment is up and continues to rise after we stopped the upward pressure, so I will be sad to expose this deteriorating state to my local community after the budget. Labor promised to create jobs for young Queenslanders, but after 18 months of government we have seen youth unemployment rise and fewer Queenslanders starting or completing apprenticeships and traineeships in my region. Labor is good at spending taxpayers' money but terrible when it comes to delivering real outcomes and jobs for Queenslanders. It talks about training for training's sake and we talk about skills and training that lead to real jobs. Labor's flagship bureaucracy, Jobs Queensland, had not even started despite the relevant legislation being passed by this parliament some eight months ago.

The Service Delivery Statements for the Department of Housing and Public Works has shown an increase in costs but a reduction in assistance for housing services. It also shows the new government's fairness review has shown an increase in underoccupancy in government owned and managed social rental housing. We also see a reduction forecast of departmental owned social rental dwellings in acceptable condition. In general, the majority of measures flag a reduction in target expectations with one notable exception—a forecast increase in the average wait times in allocation for assistance with government managed social rental housing for clients in very high or high need. It is concerning that new measures introduced only predict a 54 per cent new service standard, demonstrating effective facility utilisation by aligning and providing housing stock that matches the greatest demand of people requiring social rental housing. We are only getting half the people where they need to be. We also saw the percentage of insurance claims for defective work assessed and responded to within time frames as low as 39 per cent.

The budget papers reveal some disturbing trends in the minister's portfolio, and it is forecast to get worse. Procurement services operating costs continue to rise with no efficiency gains and promised trials of regional procurement plans have not materialised. The budget reveals QFleet vehicles

diminished in numbers even after the ballooning of the Public Service, with another 8,000 full-time equivalents. We see the sale of assets such as government employee housing. Some \$32 million has been sold to fund backlog maintenance. We see ever-increasing operating deficits across the department—\$50 million in this budget to \$120 million in the projected forward estimates—in nearly every department and agency, all forecast to perform badly. We can only guess when the minister proposes to deliver just one balanced budget.

We had confirmation during estimates that the department met with the Deputy Premier's office in relation to the negative impacts of the proposed vegetation management, including the increased costs and charges that involve the department. We also had confirmation of the significant increase in employee expenses.

I must raise the issue of the hypocrisy and the dangerous policy platform of the current minister. After nearly two years of dithering and ducking and weaving on any policy development, what we have seen is a devastating announcement regarding the people of Logan. It is inappropriate to describe the Cornerstone Living project as a public-private partnership and the Logan Renewal Initiative as privatisation. It is clearly misleading. The government was never relinquishing ownership of social housing under Logan Renewal. That was never the intention. We could wait another six years before anything happens in Logan in terms of the Cornerstone project that was mooted this week. The tenants of Logan are rightly tired of the broken promises. The local contracting community is on its knees. Many important stakeholders, including the council and tenants, were not consulted prior to the minister's decision, and it goes on.

There is consensus among housing and homelessness professionals that this government-centric approach to the provision of social housing is unsustainable and we need community housing providers to address the current crisis. With 15,500 Queensland households currently on the social housing waiting list, we wonder why there was a \$30 million underspend in the capital budget. More importantly and devastating was another broken election promise that was contrary to the 2014-15 annual report that said final transition of the tenancy and property management of approximately 4,900 social housing dwellings in Logan had been cancelled. We really need these answers for the community of Logan.