




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 1 November 2016

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.44 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill (No. 2). I think it is very important when we talk about an appropriations bill that we understand exactly what it is we are talking about. This is money that has come from the taxpayers of Queensland to the Queensland government to deliver services to them. It would be great if we could have all the money that was delivered spent on services, but unfortunately a very large proportion of our budget each year has to be spent on servicing debt—debt that was run up by the Labor government. It reached heights, on a per head basis, that no-one else in Australia has had to deal with. Unfortunately what it means is that when we borrow more money what we are really doing is saying that future generations will have to pay for what we are getting right now. Just so we are very clear and people understand what is happening, when we have to borrow money to run the government, that means that a future generation will have to pay that money back, plus the interest. Whilst the Labor Party can go around patting themselves on the back about how wonderfully they have juggled the money and shuffled debt from one part of government to another part of government—it even shuffled money from an area where it was receiving low interest to an area where now we have to pay higher interest because it has gone over to a GOC and they do not get the same rate—I am very concerned that people do not understand that this is our children's money that we are talking about.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr WATTS: I hear the member for Morayfield barking on about Toowoomba. I know that he has some family in Toowoomba. I invite him to Toowoomba for the sod turning. I ask him to encourage his minister to hold the sod turning on 1 July because the kids in Toowoomba have been waiting far too long for this centre. There is no reason why it could not have been done last year.

Government members interjected.

Mr WATTS: I take all of those interjections and I will give the reason. The reason was that year 7 was in transition and we needed to build the year 7 classrooms. When we built the year 7 classrooms, the number on campus rose to a number that made it very, very viable for the indoor centre to be built. That is why I went to the election promising that I would get this hall built. Labor went to the election promising it would not build it. If anybody has backed down and anybody has delivered for the people of Toowoomba, we can be absolutely assured that it was the minister who backed down and I have delivered for the people of Wilsonton because this centre is being built.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr WATTS: I take the congratulations. There are a couple of things that worry me greatly, though. The member said, 'Isn't it fantastic we found \$5 million?' I ask the member to go back and have a look at the budget papers because \$5 million was taken out of the allocation for the Highfields State School. I have raised this before and it concerns me going forward. The allocation in the previous budget was \$14.5 million. In this budget it went down to \$9.5 million, which is mysteriously exactly the same figure

that has been allocated to Wilsonton. I want the member for Morayfield to guarantee that his minister does not short-change the kids at Highfields in their stage 3 because they have been short-changed in stage 2. In stage 3 I expect to see that \$5 million come back into the budget.

While we are talking about the people of Toowoomba missing out on money, and I do appreciate the member for Morayfield bringing it up for me, we were going to put some passing loops in the rail tunnels going down the hill for the businesses to our west and we were going to make the tunnels larger so that we could get agricultural containers through. The minister was very happy to announce that they are going to spend \$20 million on that job. Unfortunately, in the year before that announcement the allocation was closer to \$60 million. They actually took money out. That is another case of being short-changed.

As we are talking about being short-changed or an underspend, I mention that the budget before the current budget contained an allocation for Nexus to get building underway. In Toowoomba, people were desperately chasing jobs on that site, as they still are. While it is great to see the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing fully underway, it was disappointing that in that financial year there was a \$100 million underspend. Therefore, when the government says that it found \$5 million, at some point in the future it needs to go back and look at the \$30-something million that was taken out of the rail tunnels, the \$5 million that was taken out of the Highfields State Secondary College and the \$100 million that was underspent on the Second Range Crossing. If I had all of those millions of dollars, I might have been able to find the money to build an assembly hall for the poor kids at Wilsonton.

I digress briefly to the Wilsonton campus, which is a subject brought up by the member for Morayfield. That campus has now separated from the Mount Lofty campus. Now it will be known as the Wilsonton State High School. I congratulate them on that. We have two principals. I recently visited the Wilsonton campus and spoke to the principal, who is doing a fantastic job. Their logo looks great and their uniforms look great. Last night I was at their awards ceremony. The principal told me something that is really very disappointing, which is that as the school ventures out to become its own school with some 800 children onsite, he has not yet been able to address the full assembly of students, because they have nowhere to do that. Therefore, any further delay will be an absolute tragedy for those people.

Money has been allocated in the budget now. I call on the minister to make sure that the plans are in place and that everything is done, so that on 1 July we can get the building underway and then, at the start of 2018, the new facility can be used for classrooms, assemblies, sport, music performances and all the things that the kids of Wilsonton State High School desperately want to show their community they can do. I very much appreciate the member for Morayfield bringing up the subject of the Wilsonton State High School and the money that has been allocated to it. I appreciate the minister allocating that money. It is a great outcome for the people of Wilsonton. For a long time many people, including people such as Bronwyn Cairns and Dave van Tricht, have been lobbying for the school to receive the funding for this facility. They are both members of the P&C. Next year one will run the P&C of the Toowoomba State High School at Mount Lofty and one will run the Wilsonton P&C. They are to be congratulated for all the hard work that they have done to get this good outcome. Many people have lobbied to ensure that when we do come into this place and talk about taking taxpayers' money, how we are going to allocate it and how we are going to spend it, every once in a while the kids at Wilsonton are considered. They will receive the funding allocation in the next budget to build their hall. I call on the member for Morayfield to make sure that that happens on 1 July, the day the budget comes live. Let us get the building underway and let us get it operational so that it can be used as an educational facility in 2018.

When we come into this place and talk about having to grab some extra dollars because we did not get the budget right, I remind members that that is taxpayers' money. It is Queenslanders' money. We are appropriating the money of hardworking people. It needs to be spent carefully and cautiously, and it needs to be spent in their best interests. The member for Morayfield and I do not agree on many things, but I think we would agree that the Wilsonton campus spend of \$5 million is great. I really hope that they make sure that the facility has the extra six metres needed to build two basketball courts. They are looking for only two basketball courts on a campus for 800 students. It will mean that for the first time they will be able to have a full school assembly. I want to make sure that that full school assembly happens at the very start of 2018, which means that the building needs to be started and finished on that timeline.