




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.18 pm): Before the Leader of the Opposition dashes away, I would like to encourage him to remain in his seat, to stay in the House and hear the truth he would prefer to be kept hidden from the people of Queensland—the truth that he wants to airbrush away. The Leader of the Opposition has finally confounded the critics. All of those people who thought he could not possibly deliver a budget reply speech as uninspiring as his leadership have been proven absolutely dead wrong.

I must admit that I may have misled the parliament. Yesterday I said that the performance by the opposition was the most woeful performance by an opposition in response to a budget in living history. I was wrong; that happened today. In question time today we did not get one question from the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier or to the frontbench on the Queensland budget—not one question from the Leader of the Opposition. That has not happened in living memory.

What a flat, dreary, lifeless and ultimately whining response it was from the member for Clayfield—short on detail, devoid of vision, empty of hope for our state. It is, without question, the weakest budget response in the recent history of this parliament—the reflections of a weak leader with no plan, no purpose and no idea. No wonder the Leader of the Opposition wants an election date because he is desperate to hang on to his leadership.

The Leader of the Opposition giving up asset sales is like Donald Trump giving up Twitter. Who did he quote when he said asset sales were going to go? He quoted the worst Liberal National Party prime minister in recent history—Tony Abbott. So bad was Tony Abbott that he was removed by his own party. He was sacked by his own party from the prime ministership of this nation. What else did Tony Abbott say? There would be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS—all of which he broke or sought to break as prime minister. Tony Abbott is not the person Tim Nicholls should be quoting in this parliament. That promise is as weak as Tony Abbott's promise. No-one believes him. What did he say his final plan was? What did his final plan say to the people of Queensland? It said no asset sales. What did he do? He spent \$100 million trying to con the Queensland people. I table the front page of the Strong Choices plan.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Final Plan—The Strongest and Smartest Choice—Queensland's plan for secure finances and a strong economy' [\[995\]](#).

Queenslanders know the truth about the Leader of the Opposition. They know the truth. What happened under his leadership of this state? Unemployment went up, not just up but up to an 11-year high. Electricity prices went up, not just up but up by 43 per cent. Waiting lists went up—100,000 people left waiting in the waiting room of hospitals. They could not get a specialist appointment. Waiting lists have been cut by 50 per cent since Labor came to power. Infrastructure was cut by \$1.65 billion in the first Nicholls budget. Ramping doubled in hospitals. Ramping doubled when they removed the Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative. They removed that direction and ramping doubled. I will not be lectured as health minister by the opposition in relation to ramping.

It was a government that characterised itself by untruths. Remember when they said no public servant would have anything to fear from them? They sacked 14,000 public servants. They signed a contract with Queensland. The Leader of the Opposition is a lawyer. The people of Queensland should have sued on that contract. They signed a contract with Queensland and as soon as they got into government they tore it up. He said they wanted better government, not more government. When the LNP say they do not want more government, what does that mean? They want to cut the Public Service. That is what they want to do. He talks about the dignity of work. He had no respect for the dignity of the 14,000 workers their government took relish in sacking from the Public Service in Queensland. They did it without dignity. The then premier said he had to get out the pooper scooper. What a way to treat public servants! Public servants and the people of Queensland will not forget.

One of the Leader of the Opposition's favourite mantras over the past two years has been his limp rhetoric on debt. Nothing reveals the confused and chaotic nature of his leadership than his tangled performance, first as treasurer and now as opposition leader, on the issue of the state's finances and debt. Indeed, in his final budget, he boasted that his silky fiscal skills would see total debt in the government sector stabilise at \$82 billion, having supervised its increase from \$62 billion when he came to office to \$77 billion when he made that bold announcement. One can only imagine his excitement when he heard the Treasurer's announcement that debt was down in Queensland thanks to the effective management of the public finances of this state by Queensland Labor.

What a contrast this mewling opposition makes with the Palaszczuk government and its strong recipe for a brighter future outlined in the 2017-18 budget. It is a budget for all Queenslanders—a budget that will drive up jobs and investment, that will drive down the cost of living, that will build critical infrastructure like the overdue Cross River Rail. What did we hear today from the opposition leader, the man who wants to be the premier of this state? What did we hear about Cross River Rail? We heard absolutely nothing. He did not say one word about the single biggest capital infrastructure project in this budget. The question that needs to be asked of the Leader of the Opposition is: will he cut or will he commit? Will he cut Cross River Rail or will he commit? I invite him to adopt position No. 11 and support the delivery of Cross River Rail.

This is a budget that delivers for schools, for teachers, for students and their parents—a budget that allocates \$28 million from the \$500 million Building Future Schools Fund to address enrolment growth, \$250 million for new secondary school classrooms and 230 more teachers to be employed in 2018-19. It is a familiar story. The LNP government cut front-line services. In this, and in every budget since it was elected, the Palaszczuk government has set out to rebuild and strengthen the front line.

It is a budget that delivers for jobs, with an investment of \$100 million in the Back to Work Regional Employment Package, which will generate thousands of jobs. Let us compare the two parties and the two governments. That is what the people of Queensland will do at the next election. In trend terms over the 28 months since 2015, 69,300 jobs have been created in Queensland, created by the Palaszczuk Labor government. LNP jobs growth under their whole term in government was 28,100. More than twice as many jobs have been generated by the Palaszczuk government than by the Newman LNP government in which the Leader of the Opposition served as treasurer. Unemployment is now down to 6.3 per cent in trend terms—lower than the 6.6 per cent under the LNP.

This budget is a budget that delivers for social housing, with \$1.8 billion over 10 years to deliver a substantial increase in the construction and availability of housing to help vulnerable Queenslanders who are struggling to put a roof over their heads. I say this much representing the electorate of Woodridge: you will never hear the LNP talk about public housing, Madam Deputy Speaker, because they spend their time demonising and criticising people who deserve the most basic right in our community—a roof over their head. We only have to look at their legacy when they were in government, when they said if you wanted to be away from your home for four weeks you needed to get leave—you needed to get permission from the government to leave your home.

Mr Hinchliffe: What a disgrace.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Sandgate, the Leader of the House. It was an utter disgrace to treat hardworking, decent Queenslanders in the way the LNP did, and they will do it again if they ever have the chance to get back onto the treasury bench. How different from the Leader of the Opposition when we are delivering for all of Queensland, when we are delivering for regional and rural communities—building the hospitals ignored and neglected by the LNP for decades. We are rebuilding Kingaroy Hospital, rebuilding Blackall Hospital and building new clinics at Alpha, Aramac, Dimbulah and across the state. Being a champion for the regions means more than knocking back a few in the local pub in the front bar, dressed up in the latest rustic chic from the emporium for urban spivs. The 2017-18 budget is a budget that delivers for law enforcement; that delivers for the

environment; that delivers for the Commonwealth Games, a signature project for Labor; that delivers for transport, for infrastructure, for tourism and for agriculture, and it is a budget that I am proud to say delivers for health.

Our health system is the greatest monument we have to our values. When we invest in health we are investing in the wellbeing of each individual, making a declaration about their worth, about their importance and about their rights. It is a clear articulation of the civilising ideal of fairness the Australian Labor Party expresses through the services we deliver. This year's budget allocates a record \$16.55 billion to the health system, an increase of \$1.28 billion or 8.4 per cent on last year's budget—a staggering increase of 21.5 per cent on the final budget delivered by the member for Clayfield when he was the state's treasurer.

Our commitment, as always, is to the front line, which is why we are allocating almost \$14 billion to our hospital and health services, which are the authorities responsible for delivering health services in Queensland. That represents 84 per cent of the total budget, significantly higher than the 80.8 per cent that the HHSs received in the final budget of the previous government. While they were worried about spin doctors and administrators, we are worried about the doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and paramedics because we are funding the front line. A record 84 per cent is going to our hospital and health services, not 80 per cent which the member for Southern Downs funded our hospital and health services with from the budget.

I have spoken frequently in this House about the great achievements of this government in driving down the number of Queenslanders waiting longer than clinically recommended for a specialist outpatient appointment. They were the people whom the member for Clayfield and the member for Southern Downs were happy to leave sitting in the waiting room, with the doctor never taking the appointment. They were happy to put outpatient appointments on the never-never.

A government member interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection. It was a shame. They were happy to let Queenslanders needing specialist treatment languish on a waiting list for the waiting list.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Member for Southern Downs, the minister is not taking your interjections.

Mr DICK: Because of our \$361.2 million investment over four years, that list has fallen from 104,114 when we came to office to 50,033—a decrease of 52 per cent. I am pleased to advise the House that this year another \$126.5 million of that funding will be invested to drive even further improvements.

We are also meeting our elective surgery targets across-the-board, with 97.3 per cent of patients being treated within clinically recommended times. Our target for category 2 is 95 per cent. Our category 3 target is 95 per cent, but we are meeting our elective surgery targets with 97.3 per cent of patients being treated within clinically recommended times. These are singular achievements and ones attained despite the considerable pressure being placed on our system by rising demand. Outpatient referrals, for example, are rising at a rate of around 10 per cent a year, but we have still halved the list.

Rising demand is also putting considerable pressure on our emergency departments, with presentations increasing at around 50,000 a year. Despite this growth our emergency access target in 2016-17 was 76 per cent—equal to the best result ever achieved by the LNP when in government, notwithstanding that we are facing 50,000 more presentations at our hospitals each year. That demonstrates the funding commitment and the magnificent work done by our staff in emergency departments to ensure our emergency access target stands at 76 per cent.

On our side of the House we recognise that if you want to build a better health system you invest in nurses. Our government passed the historic nurse-to-patient ratio legislation in this House, and that was opposed by each and every member of the LNP. They did not seek to amend it.

Mr Kelly: Shame.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Greenslopes. It was a shame. They did not seek to amend it. They did not seek to modify it. They voted against it. They opposed it outright—a singular sign of how they oppose the important role of nursing in our state's public health system. Through legislating safe nurse-to-patient ratios, reinstating the school-age nursing program and rolling out nurse navigators, we are rebuilding the front line when it comes to nursing. In 2017-18, 199 nurse navigators will join the 121 already working in our community.

This budget continues to deliver on the infrastructure we need for all Queenslanders but most particularly those people living in regional Queensland who were so egregiously neglected by those opposite, the LNP, who have the temerity to come into this House to pretend they represent the interests of people whom they have taken for granted for decades. The LNP has held the seat of Warrego for

decade after decade. We are the government that rebuilt Roma Hospital, last built by our Labor government. The LNP has held seats in which the town of Blackall sits for decades. We are the government rebuilding that hospital—the first government to rebuild it since 1938 when the then Labor government built that hospital. The first Kingaroy Hospital was built in 1938. The heartland of the National Party was ignored by them in government and ignored for decades. It is the Australian Labor Party that will build a new hospital—a \$62 million hospital for Kingaroy.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Mirani. It is the Australian Labor Party that will build a new hospital in Sarina—\$16 million to support our hardworking staff in that part of the state. We are a Labor government that delivers for all Queenslanders wherever they live. As I have said, the Palaszczuk government has already commissioned, commenced or completed projects in Alpha, Aramac, Cloncurry, Dimbulah and Roma. This year's budget builds on that work, as I have said, by announcing funding for the redevelopment of Kingaroy, Blackall and Sarina hospitals as well as making significant investments in Maryborough Hospital—and I thank the member for Maryborough for his strong advocacy for that program to expand and improve the emergency department—and Townsville Hospital.

All of the great regional hospitals in our state—Cairns, Townsville and Mackay—were rebuilt by the Australian Labor Party. All the big metropolitan hospitals in the south-east were rebuilt by the Australian Labor Party. We have now committed to expanding three of our big metropolitan hospitals in the south-east—the Ipswich Hospital; the Caboolture Hospital, which will get a \$15 million investment to expand its emergency department; and the Logan Hospital, a hospital very close to my heart. It is under significant pressure because nothing was done by the LNP for three years in terms of capital works. I must acknowledge, though, the work of the federal Labor government that expanded that hospital. There is nothing in the federal budget this year to invest in health infrastructure in our state, but we will do our bit as a state Labor government to expand that hospital. It is one that serves some of the most needy people in our state who are dependent on public health services—people who live in Woodridge, Waterford, Springwood, Algester and other parts of the city of Logan in the seat of Logan itself. We will support those people who need better health care by expanding that hospital. We will invest \$112.2 million for planning and preparatory works to expand those three hospitals.

We are building a new tier 3 accommodation facility to replace the Barrett centre that was closed with such disastrous effects by the previous government. They were warned. There was no mention of the closing of the Barrett Adolescent Centre today by the Leader of the Opposition. There was no apology.

Ms Fentiman: No mention of mental health.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection of the member for Waterford. There was no mention of mental health. There was no mention of the catastrophic effects of his government's decision to close that very important facility without replacement.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday, even though he is not sitting in his seat. There is only one government that sought to cut the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme and that was the LNP. Why? Because it was recommended by Peter Costello in the Commission of Audit. It was recommended to cut the PTSS, and that recommendation was accepted in the government response. Notwithstanding the dishonesty of the member for Surfers Paradise saying in public last week that funding had been cut by Labor, funding has increased by 10 per cent under the Labor government for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme. We cannot believe anything the LNP says. What we saw today from the Leader of the Opposition was a complete demonstration of why he is unfit to be the Premier of Queensland.

Ms Fentiman: Loose with the truth.

A government member interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjections of the member for Waterford and the minister. They are loose with the truth. They will say anything and do anything to achieve government. Queenslanders do not have to hear what they say; they only have to look at what they did when they were in government. If they ever have the chance again, they would do exactly the same. Members opposite have self-described themselves as 'health friends'. With friends like that, you do not need enemies. This is an important budget. It is a budget that delivers for all parts of our state. It is a budget that delivers for a growing state—a state that is one of the engines of our nation—and it should be supported by all members of the House.