




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2017

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

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (7.30 pm): I rise to support the Appropriation Bill 2017. What a very mediocre performance we have seen from those opposite this evening. It has been very mediocre indeed. We have heard speech after speech based on nothing but selective statistical analysis, platitudes, slogans and nothing of substance whatsoever. Tonight we have seen in spades a very, very mediocre opposition.

I want to start by commending the Treasurer for handing down an economically responsible budget that is great for jobs—this government's No. 1 priority. When it comes to jobs this government has outperformed those opposite on any measure independently assessed and looked at. Those opposite come in here time and time again trying to gain credibility on their performance with jobs when they were in government. If they think they are fooling anyone—or can I say conning anyone—they are doing nothing more than fooling and conning themselves.

Let me say from the outset how pleased I am, as the state's employment minister, that the budget includes an additional \$77.5 million to fund an expanded Back to Work jobs program. This includes an extra \$50 million in 2017-18 to support the continuation of the Back to Work regional program, with the new funds projected to support up to 3,400 new regional jobs. Isn't it great that we are extending this outstanding program to the south-east? From 1 July employers in the south-east who hire a long-term unemployed or a young unemployed jobseeker aged 15-24 will be in line for support payments of up to \$20,000. This part of the program is backed by an additional \$27.5 million in new funding. Queensland Treasury estimates this will support up to 1,500 new jobs in the south-east. What a great incentive for businesses in the south-east to hire a jobseeker.

We made the decision to expand the Back to Work program into the south-east because it is such an outstanding success in the regions and we want to see similarly outstanding results for jobseekers and employers in South-East Queensland. There is no doubt some in the south-east are facing employment challenges, particularly long-term unemployed and young jobseekers, and this includes jobseekers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. These are amongst the jobseekers that Back to Work South-East Queensland will target.

The results in regional Queensland speak for themselves. Already the program is supporting 4,841 jobs in regional Queensland, with more than half of those now in jobs being young people aged 15-24 hired under the \$20,000 Back to Work Youth Boost. There are also more than 800 pending applications being processed. Should all these applications be successful, this will take the total number of jobs being supported under the Back to Work program to more than 5,600 in less than 12 months. I am pleased to say the following local government areas in the south-east will soon be in line to benefit from this outstanding program: Brisbane, Redlands, Logan, Gold Coast, Scenic Rim, Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Somerset, Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Noosa and Toowoomba.

The Back to Work South-East Queensland program is capped at a maximum of five applications per employer, which represents a potential range of funding of between \$75,000 and \$100,000 for a single employer depending on the type of jobseeker employed. Importantly, given the popularity of the Back to Work regional program to date, the application cap will support a broad distribution of the available funding across employers who are supporting jobs in the South-East Queensland region.

Coinciding with the state budget, I am also pleased to announce extra support through WorkCover Queensland for employers employing apprentices. This package will deliver cost savings of around \$58.7 million to employers throughout Queensland through a direct reduction in their WorkCover premiums. WorkCover Queensland's premium and benefits package really is music to the ears of employers throughout the state. This package will deliver important cost savings to employers, making it easier for them to hire. An employer who pays the average premium rate of \$1.20 and who takes advantage of the early payment discount would pay the equivalent of \$1.14 per \$100 of wages. For small businesses with between five and 20 workers, this discount could deliver cost savings of more than \$1,000 a year.

In addition, we are encouraging employers to hire apprentices by covering the WorkCover premiums for apprentices. Businesses will pay no WorkCover premium for the apprentices they employ. This measure will deliver cost savings of up to \$5,800 a year for small businesses that employ between five and 20 workers. That is a great reward for those already skilling young workers and even more reason for employers to hire an apprentice. It is a great complement to the Palaszczuk government's 50 per cent payroll tax rebate for employing apprentices or trainees. Jobs, jobs, jobs—that is what this government is all about.

The state budget also includes \$8.2 million for Multicultural Affairs, an increase of five per cent on the previous year. This funding is part of our efforts to promote social and economic opportunities for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Ongoing programs being funded through the budget include \$1 million for the Celebrating Multicultural Queensland Grants Program for community events and projects to celebrate and promote the benefits of multiculturalism and \$2.2 million for the Community Action for a Multicultural Society—CAMS—program to facilitate social connectedness for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and groups.

This is a state budget that gets the fundamentals right. A net operating surplus of \$2.8 billion is expected for 2016-17, with the budget forecast to remain in surplus in 2017-18. General government debt is also on the way down under Labor by \$14 billion compared to the LNP's projections. It is thanks to this sound financial management that we can continue to invest strongly in health, education, infrastructure, transport, the environment and community services. These sectors were all targeted for cuts in a string of brutal budgets handed down by the member for Clayfield, then treasurer, now Leader of the Opposition, but we are now investing once again in these important services, priorities that are always neglected when the LNP is in power.

The state budget includes record health spending in 2017-18. The health budget will increase by \$1.3 billion to \$16.6 billion in 2017-18. In addition to this, the Queensland Ambulance Service budget will grow by 6.9 per cent to \$719.6 million. This growth will enable the recruitment of an extra 75 ambulance officers. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

#### Leave granted.

In my electorate of Brisbane Central, the health budget will fund a series of important capital works projects and important grant funding for frontline services:

- \$5.3 million to fund the expansion of the nuclear medicine hot-laboratory at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, worth \$6.1 million in total;
- \$3.4 million to complete the relocation of the Brisbane Dental Hospital, Turbot Street, to the University of Queensland Oral Health centre at Herston to allow the provision of state of the art dental facilities; and
- \$18.7 million to upgrade clinical systems for the Metro North Hospital and Health Service including cardiology, radiology, patient archiving, patient and medication management, and reporting and analytic part of the ICT program worth \$45.1 million.
- There's grant funding of \$2.47 million as part of a \$7.42 million commitment over 3 years to provide dementia respite services;
- Grant funding of \$2.85 million as part of a \$4.73 million commitment over 3 years to provide non-clinical support services to people with mental illness, their carers and families; and
- Grant funding of \$1.38 million as part of a \$4.11 million commitment over 3 years to provide palliative care services.

Education is also a huge winner out of this budget, especially in Brisbane Central. As part of the Palaszczuk Government's new \$500 million Building Future Schools Fund, a State High School on the site of the former Fortitude Valley State School will be built and run in partnership with QUT.

The LNP, led by the Member for Clayfield, had put up the "For Sale" sign on this site—they wanted to sell it off for development. But now Labor has saved the site from sell-off, it will instead get the first new State High School to be built in inner-Brisbane since 1963, along with one planned for the inner south.

To say that local residents are happy would have to be the biggest understatement ever—they're ecstatic.

Mr Speaker, one of the big ticket items in the State budget is Cross River Rail, and I welcome the Treasurer's announcement that the Palaszczuk Government will fully fund the project.

Cross River Rail will run through the heart of my electorate—an absolutely vital piece of congestion-busting infrastructure for the South East, and indeed for all of Queensland.

The Palaszczuk Government is committing \$2.8 billion over the next four years to this project, with a further \$2.6 billion to be allocated in future budgets for this vital piece of public transport infrastructure.

Cross River Rail is the key to transforming the public transport network in South East Queensland but its benefits go far beyond the inner city, helping to unlock economic opportunities that benefit the whole State.

This project means more frequent and reliable public transport options, and it will create 1,500 jobs each year as construction on the project ramps up.

Mr Speaker, the State budget also delivers record funding for the environment, with \$275 million over five years from 2017-18 for climate change initiatives and Great Barrier Reef protection.

There's \$175 million over five years to protect the reef and improve water quality, in addition to the \$100 million provided over five years from 2016-17 to address the recommendations of the Great Barrier Reef Water Science Taskforce.

There's also \$23.3 million over four years, and \$5 million ongoing, to ensure strong environmental standards in Queensland and a further \$2.5 million to roll out a Container Refund Scheme.

Mr Speaker, we're also on track to ban plastic shopping bags from July next year and I know that this is something that the people in my electorate feel very strongly about.

These are all great Labor initiatives, Mr Speaker, being delivered by a Labor Government that understands the importance of balancing economic growth and sound environmental outcomes.

Mr Speaker, I also have good news for the racing industry, one that employs an estimated 30,000 people in this State. Race clubs are the lifeblood of dozens of communities throughout Queensland.

Our \$6 million Country and Regional Capital Works Program has spending across in three racing codes from all regions across the State.

The package includes \$4.4 million allocated to address infrastructure needs raised through a submission process, which invited race clubs to bid for funds.

Racing Queensland also identified a further \$1.6 million of projects through an extensive review process, with a total of 113 clubs benefiting from this package.

I'm pleased to be able to approve this funding program which will begin to address infrastructure requirements in the State's racing industry immediately, with phase one to be completed within 18 months.

Our clubs in country and regional areas are a key part of their local economies, and they also provide a strong social connection for local residents. They need to be supported and I know these projects will make a difference.

Each and every Queensland racing region will benefit from this new funding, with project examples including:

- recycled and water harvesting projects in Mackay and Rockhampton;
- transportable Starting Barriers to be shared between a number of thoroughbred clubs in the Central West and Downs country regions;
- upgrades and replacement of racing infrastructure including stewards' towers, running rails, barrier stalls and starting boxes at code tracks located across the regions;
- animal welfare equipment and amenities upgrades across the codes and regions; and
- track surface upgrades across the codes and the regions.

Earlier this month I also announced a major \$13 million redevelopment of the Ipswich Turf Club, being funded through the Racing Queensland Infrastructure Fund. The redevelopment will include turf surface upgrades, new stewards and jockeys' rooms, a function room and relocation of stabling areas to allow for commercial development.

Ipswich Turf Club is one of the largest thoroughbred racing clubs in Queensland, conducting around 45 race meetings each year yet it's 26 years since the club received any funding for new infrastructure.

This redevelopment will not only ensure the club's infrastructure needs are met into the future, it will also allow for potential additional income streams so that the club can secure its own viability and growth. It's also expected to support up to 40 local jobs during construction, which is great news for the local Ipswich economy.

Mr Speaker, this is a true Labor budget that invests in health, education, transport, and the environment, one that continues to restore the front-line services that were savagely cut by the LNP.

I commend the Bill to the House.