




Speech By  
**Jarrod Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

---

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2017

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

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.40 pm): Talk about groundhog day! Just like last year and the year before that, this is a bad budget for Queensland. It has the same typical Labor characteristics: broken promises, more debt, weaker economic growth and no improvement in the unemployment rate. Despite delivering a budget two days ago, the Treasurer immediately went into hiding. Yesterday, he took part in an ABC interview but, after delivering this budget he has done no teleconferences, no live streaming, no live broadcasts and no media conferences. But the Deputy Premier has certainly been out there spruiking the government's budget. In fact, as a journalist pointed out, quite oddly the Deputy Premier stood with the Treasurer and the Premier at their budget media conference. That has not been done before. As I indicated on the day, the Deputy Premier could not trust the Premier getting Adani right, so I doubt that she could trust the Premier getting the Queensland budget right.

As I said, although the Treasurer has been in hiding, yesterday he took part in one interview. I suspect that is why he has not conducted any interviews since. Steve Austin from the ABC was talking about the ballooning Public Service numbers and the fact that, in three years, the government has created an additional 15,000 public servants and that the Auditor-General had warned of the growth of the Public Service. Last month, the Auditor-General, Anthony Close, warned that the state faced a financially unstable Public Service if the growth in numbers continued. The Treasurer's response to Steve Austin was to say, 'Well, he didn't warn me.' Steve Austin then replied, 'But you're the Treasurer.' Then the Treasurer replied, 'Well, he warned the government, but not me.' So we have a minister of the Crown, the Treasurer, handing down a budget two days ago, being warned by the state Auditor-General about the financial viability of the growth in Public Service numbers and being questioned about that by the ABC. His response was, 'Well, he didn't warn me personally.' It was just the government that was warned. Are we to believe that the Treasurer of the state did not read the warnings contained in the Auditor-General's report?

**Mr Krause:** Isn't he part of the government?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take that interjection from the member for Beaudesert. Is the Treasurer part of the government? Who knows with this government? I certainly know that the Treasurer is not part of Annastacia Palaszczuk's government. I suspect that he is more a team member of Jackie Trad's government. This Labor government has lost any shred of credibility—if it thought it had any. This is a budget to save the Premier's job. It is a budget to save the Deputy Premier's job, hence why she has been hell-bent on being at all the press conferences, and the Treasurer is nowhere to be seen.

The Premier must not be any good at multi-tasking. While she has been obsessed with Cross River Rail, millions of Queenslanders throughout this great state have been forgotten. Last year, the Premier said that her government was about jobs, jobs, jobs. We had a budget released two days ago that, in the words of the Premier and the Treasurer, was a jobs bonanza. We only have to look at the

statistics to see how untrue that statement is. Youth unemployment remains a huge issue that the government continues to ignore. Over the past 12 months, Queensland has lost more youth jobs than has any other state in Australia.

In many parts of the state, a lost generation of kids is emerging. In outback Queensland, the youth unemployment rate is almost 50 per cent. In Cairns, Wide Bay and Townsville—major economic centres—youth unemployment is higher than 20 per cent. This problem extends to many parts of the state, including the south-east. The youth unemployment rate in Brisbane east is higher than 20 per cent. In just 12 months under Labor, the youth unemployment rate in Brisbane's west has practically doubled. In the last year, 4,100 youth jobs have disappeared from the Sunshine Coast, while almost 2,000 jobs have gone from Logan-Beaudesert. What employment program is the government offering the young people in these regions? Nothing. The government's Back to Work package is not helping in some of these areas that are struggling the most.

Queensland's youth unemployment problems are hardly surprising when we consider that, quite some time ago, the employment minister said, 'There's not much you can do to change youth unemployment.' When members look at the government's record they can see why there has been no reduction in the unemployment rate. As I said last year when speaking to that year's budget, when we have a minister who says that there is nothing to be done about youth unemployment, the results back what she says.

The unemployment rate in outback Queensland has doubled. The youth unemployment rate in the Gregory electorate is nearly 50 per cent. When the employment minister was discussing last year's budget and the Back to Work program that was introduced at that time, she said that that program was going to fix all the issues of youth unemployment in the regions. But we have seen a huge increase. At that time the employment minister said that the reason the Back to Work program was not being implemented in South-East Queensland was that the challenges facing outback Queensland were not faced in South-East Queensland. Now, we have a double challenge. In outback Queensland, the unemployment rate has doubled—up to 50 per cent—and the South-East Queensland region is now struggling with the unemployment rate.

The day before the member for Toowoomba South, Mr Janetzki, was elected to this place, I talked about the LNP's \$100 million jobs package and the fact that the Labor Party's package did not apply to that member's area. At that time—the day before the member for Toowoomba South was elected to this place and he was still a candidate—I said in the media that he was going to fight to have an employment package for the people of Toowoomba, because Toowoomba had struggles with unemployment. Now, 12 months later, lo and behold the government thinks that unemployment in that area is an issue. The LNP knew that unemployment in that area was an issue. That is how you solve the issue of unemployment: you recognise there is a problem, you come up with a solution and you implement it.

The members of this government have walked around Queensland wearing a blindfold. They have no idea. The employment minister says, 'There's not much you can do about youth unemployment.' If you look at the government's record in that regard, people would believe her, because she has not done much about youth unemployment. Something can be done about youth unemployment. Proper processes and policies can assist our young Queenslanders. It is not good enough that Queensland has the second highest unemployment rate in the country. As I said, we are going backwards. Queensland is battling South Australia, of all places, for last place, meaning that more and more Queenslanders are being left behind. Even Tasmania is doing better than Queensland. According to the findings of CommSec, the Queensland economy is in a worse shape than Tasmania's economy. We are at the bottom of the barrel. Only the LNP has a plan to focus on six key economic drivers to build a better Queensland and deliver the jobs needed to restart our economy.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research December 2016 quarter figures, which were released last week, show a rapid decline in the number Queenslanders starting and completing apprenticeships under the Palaszczuk government. That new data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research revealed that, in 2016, over 21,000 fewer young Queenslanders were in some form of vocational training, that 1,100 fewer young Queenslanders had started a training course and that 3,100 fewer young Queenslanders had finished.

Yesterday, the Minister for Skills and Training blamed it all on the LNP. Labor has been in government for nearly three years. This is its third budget—and, hopefully, its last budget. The research shows that 3,100 fewer young people had finished their training course and 1,100 fewer young people had started training. How can it be the LNP's fault from three years ago when, last year, 1,100 fewer young people started a traineeship or an apprenticeship? That is the fault of the Minister for Skills and

Training and member for Redcliffe, Yvette D'Ath, and the Premier of Queensland, Annastacia Palaszczuk. When it comes to training and vocational education, Labor is all talk and no action. These issues have led to calls from both the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland and Apprenticeships Queensland for an urgent overhaul to address Queensland's sinking apprenticeship rates.

In terms of jobs, the LNP has a four-point plan to help young Queenslanders working and create up to 20,000 jobs for young Queenslanders. It includes a \$5,000 apprenticeship incentive for small business. Even in their third budget, the minister for employment does not have an apprenticeship pledge or jobs package. It is just forking out these \$20,000 notes to businesses around Queensland. It is very reminiscent of the Kevin Rudd pink batt scheme and the \$900 which my sister enjoyed receiving in London. She received \$900 to spend in the Australian economy when she was in London for five years. All the minister for employment is doing is throwing out the cash without any foresight or comprehension of a good policy. We have to build the apprenticeships. We will do that by having a \$5,000 apprenticeship incentive for small business. Those opposite have copied most of our policies. They could have copied that one. We gave an apprenticeship pledge in government. It is one of the only ones those opposite have not copied. They should copy that because it actually worked. We will deliver it in an LNP Tim Nicholls government.

We also have a \$4,000 job start incentive. We recognise that some people do not want to go to school, train or go to university; they just want a job. I reckon we should get them off the couch and the Xbox and get them a job, whether it be at the corner store or in admin for the lawyer, accountant or dentist practice. Get them off the couch, get them off the dole and get them a job. If that means a small business can employ that person, good on them. My parents come from a small business background. My parents ran a camping store. They could not afford to take on staff.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We are laughing at small business owners owning a camping store, are we? I know the Labor Party have no respect for small business.

**Mr McEachan:** That is the contempt they have for small business.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection. They have contempt for small business. I am darned proud of my parents, who raised me running a small business. They did not make any money. They raised three children. Every day after school my brother, sister and I went down to the camping store. My parents worked seven days a week because they could not afford staff. When they could afford it, they employed a young casual for Saturday morning to give my father and mother half a day off. This \$4,000 would have been a godsend for them. It might not seem like much to many people. Obviously with the disregard the Labor Party have for small business it would be nothing, but if it helps train a new casual person, gets them off the couch and gets them a first job then I say good on them.

I refer to WorkCover premiums. The LNP left the workers compensation premium the envy of every other state in Australia. Through our reforms, we had the cheapest average workers compensation premium in Australia. Those opposite always talk about the workers. The workers are the recipients of the workers compensation scheme. Who pays for it? Business pays for it. Small and large business pay for the workers compensation scheme. I am proud that when we left office we left the most healthy scheme in Australia, the biggest surplus in Australia and the lowest average premium in Australia.

The final part of our employment plan is a \$500 tradies bonus. When the honourable opposition leader raised this this morning I saw the minister for employment—as she is doing now—smiling and smirking about this \$500.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection. The member opposite says it is ridiculous. I am not sure if she understands the way traineeships work now. When they were reformed a few years ago, many of the tools for the trades were included in the awards.

**Ms Grace:** That's exactly right.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** That's exactly right. We think that if a hairdresser finishes an apprenticeship and we give them \$500 toolbox money so they can get their scissors sharpened or get new scissors or combs and brushes then that is a good thing. If the tradie who is an electrician needs to get a new electrical meter reader, good on them.

**Mr Mander:** How can you argue with that?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I take the interjection from the member for Everton. How can you argue with apprentices getting a \$500 incentive to assist them to get working?

The Labor Party said that TAFE needed rescuing. TAFE does need rescuing now. We have empty TAFE buildings. The member for Gympie raised it yesterday. We have an empty TAFE building in Gympie. The University of the Sunshine Coast wants to use it and the Minister for Skills and Training says that is a private corporation. A university is willing to take over that space to offer services and study. We found out in this budget that TAFE numbers are going down. Despite the Public Service growing, and the Minister for Skills and Training parroting on every day about skills and training being in the DNA of the Labor Party, we will have fewer workers in TAFE next year than this year. How is that investing in the life and opportunities of TAFE? We have a \$1 million review into the assets of TAFE. We do not know where it is at. We do not know when it will be released or TAFE will have students in it.

This budget is groundhog day for my great electorate of Kawana. As I am talking about people being forgotten, it seems the Premier has again forgotten that the Sunshine Coast is in the state of Queensland. The Premier should remember. Recently she was on the Sunshine Coast cutting the ribbon on Sunshine Coast University Hospital, the same hospital the Labor government refused to build for years. It took an LNP government to fund and deliver the hospital. The Sunshine Coast saw right through the Premier's facade. Every resident on the Sunshine Coast knows the history. They know Labor only delivered a paddock for kangaroos to graze on. The Premier may have cut the ribbon, but she knows that the Sunshine Coast community knows that, if it were not for the LNP, the only ribbons on the hospital site would have been the protestors' ribbons—one for every bed this Labor government refused to deliver, time and time again.

As I said, it feels like groundhog day because, once again, the coast has been snubbed by the Labor government. The headline in Tuesday's *Sunshine Coast Daily*, 'This government must really hate the Sunshine Coast', summed up the feeling of every Sunshine Coast resident who is paying for Labor's paralysis, funding cuts and increased cost of living, taxes and charges. Nothing has changed. Labor would not deliver this hospital for our region and now it has cut \$400 million from infrastructure spending on the Sunshine Coast.

The Treasurer mentioned the Sunshine Coast just once in his hour-long speech and was silent on critical major infrastructure projects like the north coast rail duplication, the Mooloolah River interchange and Bruce Highway funding to match the federal government's \$536 million commitment. Not one dollar was allocated for these congestion-busting infrastructure projects. The Labor Party does not seem to understand that Cross River Rail will do nothing to solve congestion on the Sunshine Coast. They have tunnel vision, their blinkers are on, and all they care about is protecting their inner-city mates at the next election. This was not a budget for Queensland, it was a budget for Jackie Trad. Even the Labor government's own report states that there is no do-nothing option, which is ironic given that this is a do-nothing government with respect to the north coast rail duplication if rail is to have a future in this corridor. In January this year, Building Queensland listed the project as investment ready. It topped the list of projects on the Sunshine Coast. This government is big on rhetoric but an abysmal failure on delivery. What can we expect from a Deputy Premier who is only interested in one rail project and that is Cross River Rail?

When the LNP was in government it invested \$1.8 billion to build the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. We committed to funding the \$440 million Mooloolah River interchange to better connect Caloundra, Kawana, Mooloolaba and Maroochydore and support delivery of the hospital. This road infrastructure is critical to reduce congestion on other major road corridors such as Nicklin Way and the Sunshine Motorway. It is needed to support the growth on the Sunshine Coast and provide access to the University Hospital. Instead of building this \$440 million critical piece of infrastructure, what does the Labor Party decide is a good solution—\$22 million for roundabout upgrades on Kawana Way. We went from a critical \$440 million project to roundabout upgrades. That is the legacy of the Labor government—a do-nothing, see-nothing, know-nothing government. To make it worse, it has a few million left over because, as predicted, upgrading a few roundabouts was never going to cost \$22 million. Now, as an afterthought, it wants to open up Production Avenue, a commercial and industrial estate, as a main thoroughfare to Kawana Way to try to deal with congestion on Nicklin Way. It is remarkable that this Main Roads minister thinks diverting traffic through an industrial estate is a safe and practical option. To rub salt in the wounds, he will be putting a nail in the coffin of over 20 small businesses along Nicklin Way who rely on on-street car parking to enable customers to stop and spend money in their stores. Rather than consultation, they just went ahead and designed this ludicrous plan to remove all on-street car parking, add yet another set of traffic lights on Nicklin Way and direct hospital bound traffic through an industrial estate.

I met with 20 business owners yesterday who were devastated to hear of this government's plan to put them out of business. This government talks a lot about jobs, but we all know its record. Now it wants to send over 20 small businesses broke. Guess what that means. Lost jobs! This government is trying to spend \$4 million of leftover money on Nicklin Way in a misguided attempt to reduce congestion instead of investing \$440 million on the MRI that will provide a permanent solution to the problem.

This is the short-sighted disposition that we have come to expect from this government. Under Labor the Sunshine Coast will never realise the north coast rail duplication or the Mooloolah River interchange. Labor has been in government for the best part of 17 out of the last 20 years and what have they delivered for the Sunshine Coast? Absolutely nothing.

All my constituents have received is an increase in their cost of living and higher car registration—3.5 per cent per year under Labor's watch. It is clear that only the LNP understands that families cannot afford Labor's taxes and charges, which is why we will again apply a freeze to car registration. Under this government we have seen power prices soar and water increases spike. If it costs people money, we can bet it has increased under this Labor government.

I stand by the LNP's commitment today to again freeze car registration—a real commitment to reduce cost-of-living pressures for Kawana residents. Queenslanders are crying out for leadership. Sadly, they are not getting it from the Labor government and Labor Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk. Only the LNP has the plans to build a better Kawana and a better Queensland and get Queenslanders working.