




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2017

MOTION: ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.23 pm): I rise to support the motion because I for one have read Budget Paper No. 3 which, at page 123, for the benefit of those opposite who have not read it, clearly reflects a \$400 million cut in road infrastructure funding for Queensland. Tonight I want to talk about how that will affect the Wide Bay-Burnett region, which has had \$85 million cut from its budget. It is clear that the budget was slashed to pay for the Cross River Rail and everyone who has been following closely knows that. Labor failed to spend \$400 million of promised transport and road infrastructure. Even the RACQ has talked about \$1 billion in underspend between 2017 and 2018. It is not good enough.

We all know that only one party can deliver on bridges, roads and dams. Tonight I have heard those opposite spruiking about what we did in government. In the 2014-15 budget, \$172 million was spent in the Wide Bay-Burnett region. This year, it is \$135 million. Clearly, that is \$40 million less. Given all of our needs, if those opposite think that that is acceptable, I do not know what we have to do to convince them otherwise. You cannot spin the cuts and you cannot talk about savage cuts without reflecting on the roads and bridges that we desperately need. Talk about cuts, cuts, cuts! There is plenty of them in this budget for my region.

Queensland is stagnating and the community is crying out for leadership. We cannot have a government stuck in neutral. As we know, families and businesses are paying more with higher registration fees and higher fares, yet much needed infrastructure across Queensland is not being built. Tonight I heard about only one Labor policy to build roads, that is, to simply put out their cup to the federal government, which they blame for everything. These are state government roads. If they do not understand that, maybe they need to read the budget papers again. Labor's only policy is not to fight for our regions. The local Labor members up the back are picking fights on subjects they do not even know about while clearly misleading residents on their commitment to deliver. The budget is a clear fail, particularly on road infrastructure.

Let us talk about the Bruce Highway. It is the state's economic lifeline. When the LNP came to office, the Bruce Highway was in crisis. We commissioned reports, we got on with the Commonwealth government and we put \$8.5 million into a 10-year strategy and now we have a new deal for regional Queensland that will clearly deliver. When nearly \$100 million is cut from our region, it is no wonder people feel we are being forgotten.

Forgotten projects include community resilience and recovery. After two major flooding and weather disasters in recent history, Wide Bay and Bundaberg residents who live in flood-prone zones along the Burnett River clearly need certainty that positive action will be taken to fully fund mitigation projects, levees and roads, especially to escape routes. It is not good enough that the safety of regional residents is not being considered. Three years after the floods, and still we have nothing. In the northern part of the Wide Bay-Burnett, funding was sought for flood mitigation to raise the Essendean Bridge and Fingerboard Road. In major weather events, Agnes Water, Seventeen Seventy and Baffle Creek are cut off for prolonged periods. I am sure those in the south-east corner would not tolerate that sort of inaction.

We owe it to those communities to demonstrate our support by prioritising funding for those projects. We need safety upgrades in the regions. Intersections including Ashfield Road and Port Road, the Pine Creek turnoff on the Bruce Highway and the Buxton Road intersection, to name a few, need upgrading. All of those roads have been clearly identified as needing funding, but all have been forgotten. Let us not forget the Roundhill Creek dredging project under the MSQ budget. Clearly things need to happen if we are going to maintain tourism and all of the connectivity issues that tourism needs. Dedicated bicycle paths have also been forgotten.

Labor's transport budget is a con designed to protect Annastacia's job and pork-barrel Labor seats in the south-east. Wide Bay residents continue to suffer under a bad government. Under Labor incompetence, power, water and registration costs are set to skyrocket. Wide Bay residents should be livid after yesterday's pitiful transport announcements dressed up in this budget. Labor's debt will reach \$81.1 billion for the first time in our history, which means that every man, woman and child in my electorate will owe \$16,000. That is now 18.1 billion reasons for Wide Bay residents not to vote for Labor.

We were promised a jobs bonanza, but what we got was a jobless budget and now we are facing a full-blown jobs crisis across the state. I remind the House that every year in Bundaberg the unemployment rate has risen, with youth unemployment now at 25 per cent, that is, one in four young people who were looking for something from this government yesterday. Even today during a ministerial statement the transport minister was spinning the fact that we have suffered savage cuts. Wide Bay residents are not stupid. They see straight through the spin and the rubbery figures. This do-nothing Labor government continues to starve Wide Bay of vital infrastructure investment and has essentially sold us out.

Once again, Bundaberg will miss out on its fair share in favour of securing inner-city votes. Labor always promises the world, but it never delivers. The Premier should hang her head in shame over her failure to deliver for our region. This is not good enough. Wide Bay-Burnett residents deserve better. We deserve what is only our fair share.