




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (11.10 am): In my response to the 2017-18 budget, I can assure the House that Bundaberg and Burnett residents are disappointed after this week's pitiful announcements for our part of the world dressed up as a budget. What I am hearing is that residents quickly saw through the spin of reannouncing projects over and over and a Labor budget that was a con designed to protect jobs in the south-east corner.

Every single Bundaberg and Burnett resident will continue to suffer under this bad government. Power, water and car registration are all set to skyrocket to cover Labor's historic poor management. Labor's debt will reach \$81.1 billion for the first time in history. This means every man, woman and child in my region—and all Queenslanders—will owe \$15,795 each. We were promised a jobs bonanza, but what we got was a jobless budget. We are now facing a full-blown jobs crisis across our region. One in four youth now cannot get a job in our region. Bundaberg residents are not stupid. They have seen straight through the spin and rubbery figures. They will certainly see through the spin when Labor starts delving deeper into their hip pockets with the many new taxes and charges that our residents now have to pay.

Labor has not delivered one single new infrastructure project for the region in this year's budget. This do-nothing government continues to starve the Bundaberg region of vital infrastructure investment. They have essentially sold us out. Once again the Bundaberg region will miss out on its fair share in favour of securing inner-city votes. Labor always promises the world but delivers very little. Labor even had the hide to slash infrastructure and road funding. It has already been debated in this House. Budget paper Nos 1, 2 and 3 clearly state that the funding cut from my region is \$85 million. This is not good enough. Bundaberg residents deserve better. We deserve our fair share. What was bitterly disappointing was that there is no action on wholesale electricity prices, which are up by 70 per cent under this government. Bundaberg families will now have to pay an extra \$50 and will be \$105 worse off when their electricity bills come out later this year. Bundaberg residents face an even bigger price increase in 2020 when the government subsidies end and the money merry-go-round comes to a stop—something successive Labor governments never deal with. There is just more debt and deficit.

Despite Labor's claim of a record health spend, people in my region are still waiting longer for essential services. We have gone back to the bad old days where ramping, waiting lists and reduced services are the norm. Patient travel subsidies in my region have been cut and dental vouchers for those most vulnerable have been ignored. Ambulance ramping has well and truly set in across Queensland and Labor has no solution to fix it. This is a classic Labor health budget, made up of massive cost blowouts, poor patient outcomes and millions underspent in promised capital.

In relation to the budget response for the Department of Housing and Public Works, in an all-too-familiar trend of poor performing Labor ministers, we have the Minister for Housing and Public Works continuing to erode confidence in Queensland. We have a housing crisis under Labor and more and

more of the most vulnerable Queenslanders are being left on waiting lists. It is almost a year ago since the minister used the estimates committee hearing to cover up the announcement of the rushed and now disastrous decision to disband the Logan Renewal Initiative, although it was supported by Treasury. We all remember the decision to cancel and rush through, with no consultation with project proponents, no consultation with local stakeholders and no consultation with the Logan City Council. There are significant concerns, not only within the Department of Housing and Public Works but also across a number of government departments with regard to this minister. We understand the reported chief architect of disaster of many of the minister's poor and naive decisions, the chief of staff, has abandoned the sinking ship.

In relation to the new 10-year Housing Strategy and the spin and glossy brochures that have been released this week, for nearly three years the Labor state government has been advising of the intent to release a new Housing Strategy which has finally arrived. Meanwhile, a review of the originally approved Logan Renewal contract reveals that had the Logan Renewal commenced in accordance with the August 2014 signed contracts, the following would have been achieved for the people of Logan and that part of Brisbane: 125 social and affordable houses would have been completed and occupied right now; it would have delivered \$25 million in building and construction investment; it would have contributed 50 full-time-equivalent new jobs in Logan—and remember that no state government employees would have lost their employment or been required to join any other entities if they did not want to, despite what those opposite say. In addition, a further 175 social and affordable dwellings would have been in planning or underway, locking in a further \$23 million in construction investment and expanding the jobs growth to 95 full-time equivalents.

The new 10-year Housing Strategy identifies 492 social housing dwellings in Redlands and Logan in the first five years. Let us assume half of these are in Logan—say, 250—the Logan Renewal would have delivered twice this many in the same period: 500 dwellings in Logan within the first six years, being 200 social and 300 affordable. One hundred and twenty-five of these would be occupied right now.

What remains particularly unclear at this stage is how the government will pay for the targeted development of 4,522 social homes and 1,034 affordable homes over the strategy's 10-year period, when its current plans indicate a preference for the state to continue to own and manage all social and affordable rental housing. This locks the state out of Commonwealth rent assistance, which is a valuable contribution only accessible to non-state government providers of social or affordable housing.

The Logan Renewal leveraged private finance, Commonwealth rent assistance and the skills of the community housing sector to return \$900 million in value back to the state in cash and property from an input by the state of just \$13 million in cash and \$228 million in land transfers—1,000 of the total 5,000 properties in Logan. That is a massive 375 per cent return on investment for the state and the people of Queensland. It is not clear how the new strategy will be able to achieve these same results.

With a complete policy vacuum or direction from the minister, there is one set of figures that are interesting and worth revealing. They are the figures that expose the lie which is Labor's 'no asset sales' mantra before the last election. The reality is the Palaszczuk government was selling government housing in order to fund backlog maintenance programs. Under Labor, 115 government owned properties had either been sold or were shortlisted for sale in the future—60 properties had already been sold for \$16.7 million. For a so-called 'no asset sale minister' he seems to be very busy selling off anything he can lay his hands on.

In a long line of failures, all based on some Marxist reform agenda, Labor has robbed the people of Logan of many advancements. A billion dollars in Commonwealth money has been lost. Had Labor not destroyed the urban renewal project, 200 homes would be under construction and occupied. How many are actually being built today? I can tell members it is none. We see the policy of returning tenancy management back to government, again robbing Queensland of hundreds of millions of dollars and ensuring that inefficiencies will return. We note that the Queensland Housing Strategy is now from 2017 to 2027. What a disappointment for Queenslanders. LNP's Housing 2020 and Homelessness to Housing Strategy was working and reducing Labor's waiting list. The LNP was well on target to deliver 12,000 additional social and affordable housing dwellings by 2020, not 2027. Under Premier Palaszczuk and Minister de Brenni, it is back to the same sad, old Labor story: another failure and wait lists again blowing out to nearly 29,000 people waiting for accommodation.

I note the headline this week 'Budget and social housing failure continues under Labor and Minister de Brenni'. Minister de Brenni has proven he is incapable of managing the Housing and Public Works budget. Last year the budget blew out by \$182 million and he is showing no appetite to fix this mess, with a forecast deficit of \$169 million in this year's budget spend of \$2.006 billion—an 8.4 per

cent deficit. This is increasing by \$50 million every year under this minister. Department of Housing and Public Works wages have blown out by more than 10.5 per cent to \$212.862 million while staff numbers have increased by 70 full-time equivalents to 1,698, underlining high wage growth in the department. We have a social housing disaster. The Labor budget delivers less through a plan that will cost much more. As usual, there is no detail and Queenslanders are being asked to trust this minister. Labor seriously short-changes needy Queensland families. Under the Bligh government's mismanagement, more than 30,000 Queenslanders were left languishing on the social housing waiting list. The LNP reduced the waiting list by 37 per cent to under 19,000 in its first two years in government. Labor wants Queenslanders to believe them when clearly they have failed.

Labor's record on social housing speaks for itself. Labor scrapped the community supported Logan Renewal Initiative that would have delivered 2,600 new homes in Logan. It was an initiative with no cost to the state government and Queensland taxpayers. Labor ignored locals, non-profit community housing groups and the Logan City Council, who all supported the initiative, and dumped the project without any consultation. After scrapping the initiative and copping widespread condemnation for pandering to unionists to keep 20-odd department jobs at Logan, Minister de Brenni announced that Labor would build 70 new homes at a cost of \$100 million—as if 70 would compensate for the loss of the proposed 2,600 new dwellings. It was typical Labor—it costs more and delivers less. Now Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk is breaking another election commitment not to sell assets. The housing plan announced in the budget is based on selling unused government owned land. Labor deceived Queenslanders to get into government and now it plans to sell even more of our assets.

There is only one government that ever sold assets—a Labor government. Labor's Housing Strategy includes \$1.8 billion for a 10-year housing strategy but only \$670 million is included in the budget, and across the forward years only around \$190 million is new money. More than \$1 billion is outside the budget and the forward estimates. There are 4,522 social homes and 1,034 affordable homes statewide but there are no details on where or how. The strategy claims to support 450 full-time jobs in 10 years. The report talks about 'leveraged' opportunities with the private sector but, given Labor ripped off the contractors and ripped up the contracts for the Logan Renewal Initiative, it is hard to imagine anyone will want to work with them.

It is really interesting that the state Labor government is talking about surplus state land being developed for residential purposes, with only five to 25 per cent of new dwellings being designated for social and affordable housing. Essentially, we will sell our soul to make five per cent of housing available for those most vulnerable. This desperate policy to sell state land to developers has little detail and does not support Queensland. Finally, after 2½ years we are talking about private and public delivery of residential dwellings, and using and redeveloping underutilised government land—something the government could have opened the door on when first elected.

We hear a lot of talk but little detail on the Housing Construction Jobs Program, another government led and staffed department called a Housing Partnership Office to deliver housing projects. I believe there are enough staff already capable of delivering these reforms without another bureaucracy. Another bureaucracy is flagged in a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing body. We also see the intention to create housing referral teams to support people to access housing. Is this not the role of the government-led agenda in the housing service centres where there is plenty of scope to continue to recruit many public servants? How much of the \$1.8 billion is flagged to pay for shiny new offices and staff?

What is also disappointing is that the Housing Strategy flags the proposal to create another Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan. Those Indigenous communities across Queensland must feel insulted that we are again talking about reviewing and not about doing. Finally, it has taken 2½ years for the government to talk about reforming the department's intake and dealing with housing tenants. The LNP had already established assessment and allocations processes and was set to identify people's needs and work to ensure tenants' aspirations and dignity were being addressed in many cases to obtain the great Australian dream—home ownership. Sadly, with the return of government-led agenda and delivery, it has taken years for this government to catch up.

We note talk of Indigenous ownership opportunities. In nearly three years in government we once again see Labor handing in the LNP's homework, spinning another glossy brochure and claiming credit for LNP reforms to allow Indigenous Queenslanders the opportunity to own their own homes. After 30 years of inaction by Labor, we introduced reforms in 2013 and 2014 that were reannounced this week in a glossy brochure in the Queensland Housing Strategy. The question the Indigenous community should be asking is: what has the government been doing for the last 2½ years? I note that it appears funding has been cut for the Housing and Employment Program, HEP, which has been running since

2012 in Bundaberg, Capalaba and Ipswich—a \$1.2 million program helping those most vulnerable. We look forward to questions in estimates about why we see more cuts to those most vulnerable Queenslanders.

In the section on Queensland's Housing Strategy labelled 'Confidence', which is ironic in its title, after only 2½ years the minister now talks about reforming the Housing Act 2003, the Residential Tenancies Act and the Rooming Accommodation Act 2008. It is proposed to establish a Housing and Homeless Research Alliance to better support targeted research and analysis. There is a lot of analysis and a lot more reviews.

In another go-slow, we now have commitments to amend the Retirement Act 1999 and the Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003. If we needed any further evidence of problems within the department, it is the litany of errors in the strategy. When the strategy first came out, Central Queensland's fact sheet contained errors and misinformation about the budget spend. It appears on the website that we have discrepancies. In one area it talked about \$1.8 billion for the Queensland Housing Strategy to deliver more social and affordable housing and in another area we see \$1.6 billion quoted. I am sure a lazy \$200 million does not matter if it is in a glossy brochure. In seeking trust from this budget, these types of discrepancies do not instil confidence. One can imagine the confidence the construction sector foresees when it looks at those glossy brochures!

The LNP's record on housing speaks for itself. The 2020 plan was on target to deliver an additional 12,000 homes by 2020—nearly threefold the number Labor now promises, essentially at no cost to government. The LNP plan also included the renewal of existing housing stock that was aged and no longer fit-for-purpose. The LNP worked with the non-profit sector to deliver better outcomes for people in social housing but Labor now has abandoned this approach.

I conclude by reaffirming that we are committed to building a better Queensland, to building stronger families, to providing safer and livable communities and that the LNP will deliver better and not more government.