




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (6.24 pm): I rise today to speak in favour of the budget bills before us. I want to start by rebutting some of the things that we have heard today. We heard that dreaded phrase that we hear in education: ‘Let us go back to basics.’ The member for Macalister and I immediately thought: what does that mean for teaching critical thinking, teaching kids to evaluate what they read and to ask questions? According to those opposite, we just need to teach our kids how to read and write and to add up. It used to be that the LNP had its 19th century philosophy: all working class kids needed to do was the basics so they could get on to work. I would hate to see them returning to their philosophy.

Tonight my three children—Guy, Arabella and Rebecca—are watching this debate being streamed over the internet and I want to tell them that we will not allow the LNP to drag us back to a 19th century mentality in regard to education. I reject that ideology.

The other issue those opposite have talked about is air conditioning. Was it, ‘Let’s air-condition every school, every classroom’? I forget. We are already on the way to doing this. Many of our classrooms are already air-conditioned. The best thing we can do to air-condition our schools is to implement the Advancing Clean Energy Schools program. We are putting \$97 million worth of solar panels on the roof of 800 schools out of the 1,200 across Queensland, saving them about \$10.2 million a year. We are already on the way to doing that.

I want to point out that the electrical infrastructure in many of those schools need to be upgraded. There are two schools in my area that have electrical infrastructure that is about 40 years old. They tell me that the fuses in one of those schools go every time they put an extra oven on in the tuckshop. Money needs to be spent on evaluating and upgrading the electrical systems at all of these schools. I have taken that up in my region and we are doing that. Last time those opposite thought about this they said it would cost about \$2 billion. Who knows how much it will cost this time as they will have to upgrade all the electrical systems in the schools. I do not think they have thought about these costs. They have already backflipped on this as well.

Mr Madden interjected.

Mr WHITING: I take that interjection. Where are they going to get the money from if they get rid of all of these taxes? Labor is always proud to bring down budgets that deliver the jobs, education and health systems needed by Queenslanders and Australians. Jobs, education and health care are more than just wants; they are profound needs for working Queenslanders. They are non-negotiables we need to deliver. We are conscious that it is up to us to do the hard work and make it a reality. This budget is doing exactly that.

Traditionally, local members focus on the physical infrastructure that has been funded as part of this budget, and I am very pleased to see in my area funding for the Morris Road-Deception Bay Road intersection. This \$6 million project will increase the capacity of this intersection. We will spend

\$2.3 million on it this financial year. It will connect to the works we have already done at the \$38 million Rothwell intersection that, once again, Labor has delivered. In the last term we did \$6 million worth of work on Deception Bay Road. Compare that to the under half a million dollars that the LNP spent on it in its last term. Add to that the \$6 million worth of work we will do on this intersection and add on to that, at either end of Deception Bay Road, the Rothwell intersection at \$38.5 million and the \$30 million we are putting into the Deception Bay Road overpass. It just goes to show that in my area it is only Labor that people can rely on to deliver the infrastructure that we need.

My focus this year, and indeed in this term, is the social infrastructure. We are making major inroads into providing the social infrastructure that our communities need. They are the systems that provide the education, the health care and the jobs that we all need. We desperately need this social infrastructure in my area because I still see the same level of disadvantage—the same households that are struggling to get ahead throughout my electorate, which are the same ones that I saw many years ago.

The best social infrastructure that we can provide are initiatives that give people the education, skills and training to get them into jobs. The best of these initiatives—and members have heard me talk about it—is the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. In Bancroft \$5 million has been spent on 25 community driven projects under the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. There have been 683 people assisted by these programs and 514 have got jobs as a result.

Mr Madden: Fantastic!

Mr WHITING: That is a great result. We are boosting the budget by \$20 million this year to \$80 million for 2018-19.

Mr Madden: Didn't they get rid of it?

Mr WHITING: I take that interjection. They told me that they did not want to get rid of it, that they would keep it, but we heard later during the election they would only cut it by about 40-odd per cent. Maybe that was not getting rid of it: they would just cut half of it out. We are extending it for another two years with another \$160 million. As we have heard, that is \$420 million over six years since the Palaszczuk government was elected in 2015, supporting 54,000 Queenslanders into work.

Another part of our social infrastructure is great schools. The Palaszczuk government is making sure our local schools are the best they can be with the best teachers, the best support staff and the best classrooms.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.



Mr WHITING: As I was saying, in terms of social infrastructure under this budget we will also finish the new \$15 million five-storey senior classroom block at the senior campus of North Lakes State College.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr WHITING: Hear, hear! It is a great achievement, as will be the new high school at Mango Hill, which is on its way and will take pressure off North Lakes State College. Under this budget, another two initiatives are very welcome pieces of social infrastructure. The Mango Hill Progress Association will receive \$9,800 for their festival in the lead-up to the 100-year commemoration of the armistice. This stellar local organisation runs many family friendly events that really build the community capacity in our area.

The other welcome news is that we are getting \$15,000 to deliver the First 5 Forever family literacy initiative at our local library. Deception Bay has a strong record in delivering that community run program where parents, often young mothers, spend time reading to their toddlers at our local library. While the kids get so much from that, so do the parents. They get increased contact with other parents, connections with other community and family-support organisations and an enhanced education outcome. It is not as big a program as some of the huge road programs and the like, but it is one of the most delightful things that I have been involved in as the local member.

For my electorate, some of the best pieces of physical infrastructure are also social infrastructure and the best example is Cross River Rail. I calculate that each week it will take about an hour and a half off the total commute time for Bancroft residents travelling to and from the city every working day. More trains in peak hours and more seats for passengers mean more time at home with families. This is another great social outcome from that infrastructure.

Another great example of physical infrastructure that is also good social infrastructure is our hospitals. I am very pleased to see \$252 million allocated to the redevelopment of the Caboolture Hospital. I commend the member for Morayfield for his role in that project. The Caboolture Hospital is

one of the two public hospitals in my area. I have only good words to say about the Caboolture Hospital. I have taken family members there. They are always busy, but all patients are processed very quickly. The hospital will only get busier and we need that \$252 million.

Mr Harper: The nurses are great.

Mr WHITING: I take that interjection from the member: there are always great nurses there as well. I say to our local residents that they can place their faith in the staff and facilities at the Caboolture Hospital.

I only have a few minutes left, but I want to talk about how this budget is not just about the physical and social infrastructure that we can build but also about the economic infrastructure of the state. We are building real strengths into our economy as the Palaszczuk government diversifies the economy outside the traditional areas of mining and agriculture. Our renewable energy sector simply did not exist under the previous LNP government. Now we have a \$4.2 billion pipeline of projects underway or financially committed to. The Advance Queensland program will set up our economy for the future. It builds up our entrepreneurs and helps small and medium businesses to innovate and grow. This year an extra \$132 million will go to Advance Queensland, making about \$650 million in total.

I find it very satisfying to tell people in my area how Labor is actively supporting small businesses throughout our region. In North Lakes we have more startups and home based businesses than anywhere else in the region. I always tell my constituents about things such as the ecoBiz program, to which another \$4 million has been allocated in this budget. The program helps business save money by lowering operating costs and lessening their environmental impact. More than 1,000 Queensland businesses have already been helped through ecoBiz.

I tell my constituents that we are extending the 50 per cent payroll tax rebate for apprentices and trainees which is a real financial incentive that I hope will tip their decision into employing more young people in our region. I also tell them about the Business Development Fund, which will receive an extra \$40 million over the next few years to help people turn an idea into a commercial reality or help stabilise things for an angel or venture capital investment. This is a great budget and I commend it to the House.