




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.49 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the appropriation bills for 2018. This week the Treasurer stood up and demonstrated what we have all come to expect from a Labor government: spend, spend, spend and worry about paying it back at some time in the future. Queenslanders should be worried that this government has moved beyond its election commitments to a point where this state is facing unprecedented levels of debt. Debt is forecast to rise from \$69.5 billion in 2017-18 to a whopping \$83.1 billion in 2021-22. That should be ringing alarm bells for all Queenslanders, because the cold, hard fact is that Queensland is drowning in this debt. When you couple that with an unemployment rate of 6.25 per cent, you have to say that the future is not all that rosy for this state. As the Director of Queensland Economic Advocacy Solutions said in his analysis of the budget, we are stealing from our children and their children. It is our future generations who will be saddled with servicing this debt. Whilst the Treasurer and this government might be happy to live in the here and now, I have grave concerns about the ability of this great state to bounce back from this crippling debt.

This is a budget highlighted by five new taxes that will raise a staggering \$2.2 billion. If that is not bad enough, there are four new fees that have come out of nowhere and been lumped on Queenslanders. There is no sugar-coating what this is. Why should the people of North Queensland have to contribute to the waste levy for an issue which exists in the south-east corner of the state? The problem exists because New South Wales is dumping its rubbish at Ipswich—not Townsville or Cairns—so why are we paying? Put simply, this government has broken an election promise to the people of Queensland. Between now and the next election I will be taking every available opportunity to remind people of that fact.

I want to start by looking at my shadow portfolios of natural resources and mines and North Queensland. I note that the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme will receive \$17 million over two years to take action to ensure the regulatory framework for safety and health in the resources sector is contemporary and effective. The health of our mineworkers is paramount, and I have plenty of them in my electorate. I know that this government has been slow to act on the recommendations contained within the black lung report; however, this is an important issue for my electorate and they need to be implemented immediately and monitored closely.

This is a government that does not like to talk about mining, coal or gas, particularly in the south-east corner of the state, but let us look at what the resources sector contributed to state coffers. It was almost \$4 billion in 2017-18. About \$500 million more than estimated in the midyear review, and \$1 billion more than predicted in last year's budget, was collected by the state government in coal royalties alone. This Labor government was elected on a platform of mentioning mining only twice in the entire election policy commitments. The irony is that it is those exact resource industries that have provided the government with the cash it needs to pursue its pet projects rather than reinvest in these profit- and job-creating industries.

Make no mistake: Labor actively undermines and secretly opposes the mining and resources sector to secure Greens preferences in inner-city Brisbane seats like the Treasurer's yet, as QRC chief executive Ian Macfarlane said this week—

Every Queensland—regardless of where they call home—shares in the wealth of the sector through royalties paid to the Government. These royalties go to schools, hospitals and roads in the south-east of Queensland.

We should not forget that. The LNP is proud to support and stand shoulder to shoulder with our miners in recognition of the contribution they make to this state. 'Coal' is definitely not a dirty word on this side of the House. It will continue to play an integral part in the future of this state for many years to come.

I turn to the Gas Action Plan—a plan that was promised two years ago and still has not been delivered. I note in the budget that \$4.4 million has been allocated over three years to promote the development of the gas sector and bring supply to market through that Gas Action Plan. My question to the minister is: how much longer do we have to wait? I say: get on with the job and deliver the plan that will give certainty to gas producers and consumers throughout the state. As with coal, the government is quick to put its hand out for the royalties but not so quick to put money back into the sector to support its growth.


The Premier is quick to point out the government's record Public Service employment figures, yet when it comes to the department of natural resources and mines the budget papers show a reduction of 11 employees across the department. The Treasurer stood in this place on Tuesday and trumpeted the resource sector and the increased royalties that have flowed into government coffers from the state's coalmines, yet when it comes to supporting the department that has responsibility for our mines the government has actually cut positions. That highlights for me the lack of clout the relevant minister has around the cabinet table.

On the subject of royalties I want to say that I now have the greater percentage of coalmines in this state located in my electorate. As a consequence, most of the \$3.7 billion in royalties that have flowed into Treasury have come from my electorate. Is it unreasonable for me to expect this government to recognise the contribution my electorate is making to the state economy and fund the critical infrastructure and projects we so desperately need—projects like roads, bridges, dams, the Bowen Marina, Ayr industrial estate and new police stations at Clermont and Nebo, to name a few?

I cannot speak strongly enough on the importance to my rural towns of maintaining and growing the population of these communities. I note in the budget Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities additional funding of \$2½ million over two years to implement and administer the requirements of the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act 2017. The object of this act is to implement a 'locals first' program, legislating against the use of a 100 per cent FIFO workforce for the operation of mines located near a regional community. Many of my towns, such as Glenden, Nebo, Clermont and Middlemount, are struggling to maintain services and deliver programs because of population decline. I certainly hope that the funding identified in the budget is put to good use in attracting and retaining workers in our rural and regional communities and is not swallowed up by bureaucratic red tape. This money needs to flow through to the coalface in support of local jobs and training, with a view to attracting workers and their families back to the bush.

I turn to the subject of water. I start by asking the minister: where is the new office of SunWater going to be located? I note that \$6.23 million has been allocated to relocate the office. I certainly hope it will be relocated to the regions, where it makes practical sense given the importance of irrigation water to these areas.

This Labor government has been dragged kicking and screaming to the table to provide funding for the construction of Rookwood Weir. While it is encouraging to see that the state government has finally committed to matching the LNP federal government's \$176 million for Rookwood Weir, that is where it stops. There is no other funding in the budget for dams. Doesn't that highlight the fundamental difference between those opposite and the LNP, who have committed to building the dams that we need throughout Queensland for water security and economic prosperity? Labor does not have a plan for water security—unlike the LNP, which has already committed to delivering the necessary water infrastructure to our state. More dams means more jobs, greater job security and reliable water supplies for decades to come. This Labor government does not understand how critical investment in water infrastructure is for the future of this state. The budget does not allocate the required funding for upgrades or construction of dams that will grow regional Queensland.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.00 pm), continuing: Unbelievably, the federal government has \$3 billion of funding on the table for dams, but Annastacia Palaszczuk is not interested in water security.

Moving on to natural resources, isn't it ironic that a month after the vegetation management bill was debated in this House the government suddenly announces funding of \$4 million over two years to establish a scientific program to support an enhanced Statewide Landcover and Trees Study, or SLATS, to identify and report on the condition and extent of regrowth vegetation and inform habitat conservation? Wouldn't that have been handy to have during the recent debate because, as we highlighted, the science used by the minister in his contribution was out of date and flawed in that it failed to measure regrowth? That is too late for our farmers of course, but nevertheless I am sure all of our farmers along with industry bodies such as AgForce and QFF will be eagerly awaiting the next report.

I noted with interest when going through the budget documents that the government has made an art form of reannouncing projects across the state. In my electorate the Bruce Highway Haughton River Bridge project is a good example. How many more times will we see this project announced as a major contribution in a budget speech? This is not new. It has been on the agenda for years and local residents are becoming sick of the constant media spin by this government regarding this project. All I can say is: get on with the project. The construction of a new police station at Bowen is another example. I was in Bowen last week and police officers and staff have already moved in and are working from the station, so never mind announcing that the government is going to build it. It has been built and completed.

The Treasurer is quick to trumpet Cross River Rail and the importance of roads in the south-east of the state, but there are still highways and major arterials in the electorate of Burdekin which are unsealed. That is right: road trains are transporting produce, livestock and resources on unsealed roads. Whilst I welcome the announcement that funding has been allocated to seal sections of the Bowen Developmental Road and Clermont Alpha Road, I will continue to fight to have the remaining sections sealed as a priority given their strategic importance to the region.

What do I see as priorities going forward for my electorate of Burdekin? A new police station at Clermont; a new joint police station and ambulance centre for Nebo; the construction of a food-processing plant at Bowen; funding for the sealing of the May Downs Road and further pavement work for the Bowen Developmental Road and Clermont Alpha Road; construction of the Phillips Creek high-level bridge on Dysart Moranbah Road; upgrade of the Bowen sports precinct; the Bowen marina and construction of the superyacht service centre at Bowen; funding for the upgrade of the Peak Downs Highway between Moranbah and the Gregory Developmental Road; and funding for the development of industrial land at Ayr. There are local business owners in Ayr who are ready and willing to construct business premises on this particular land, yet it is still being held up by government red tape. We need that development and we need the jobs. How much longer do we have to wait?

I also want to acknowledge the funding made available for the construction of the Moranbah Youth and Community Centre which will be delivered in partnership with BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance Coal Operations and a multipurpose hall at the Moranbah State High School. This hall is something that I have been fighting for for some time and I know the school community will be relieved that it finally has a building where it can hold school assemblies and functions out of the weather. I note funding of \$640,000 has been allocated for the Bowen Neighbourhood Centre. I want to take this opportunity to highlight the excellent work that the centre performs in the Bowen community and the untiring efforts of the staff in that centre to make a difference in Bowen and the surrounding areas. This is another project that I have been fighting for, and it will be welcome news for the staff who have persisted for so long in working in unsuitable and cramped conditions.

Turning to the broader North Queensland area and the feedback from stakeholders like councils, advocacy bodies and businesses, Mayor Bob Manning in Cairns says that the budget was underwhelming and he was disappointed that it was only a small percentage of total funding needed for the Smithfield bypass. As he said—

We're not running ahead of the game, we're struggling to keep up with the game.

There is only a mention of a global tourism hub as opposed to a commitment to deliver that. The Advance Cairns chief executive says that there does not appear to be any major infrastructure funding for the region other than reiterating previous budget commitments. There is no new funding for croc management and no budget line for dredging of the Trinity Inlet which is supposed to start next year. In November last year the Premier visited Cairns State High School and pledged \$11 million to build a new multipurpose hall, yet in the budget there is only an allocation of \$900,000 for refurbished classrooms and of course no funding for Nullinga Dam.

Moving on to Townsville, Townsville Enterprise says that there is nothing to cut energy costs and nothing to address unemployment. It highlighted that 11,000 people are still looking for jobs in Townsville. There is nothing on the Mount Isa rail—a vital component of the Townsville eastern access corridor. There is nothing for the entertainment and exhibition centre. These are words from Townsville Enterprise's Chief Executive, Trish O'Callaghan. There is nothing for the Drive It NQ facility, the Townsville concert hall or the Wallaman Falls ecotourism plan. There is nothing for the Australian tropical biosecurity network. The north has been short-changed because these are priority projects that have been highlighted year after year after year and still they remain undelivered.

The Treasurer has clearly shown in this budget that she is incapable of delivering a sustainable, long-term plan for Queensland and an ability to create jobs. Let us contrast that with the LNP, which is committed to getting Queensland back on track. The Leader of the Opposition clearly outlined a plan going forward that will reduce unemployment, manage debt and provide much needed relief to residents in North Queensland in terms of providing retail competition in the electricity sector. Business owners are looking to government to deliver the big-ticket items—the major projects—which would drive investment and boost consumer confidence. Delivering a budget with a forecast debt of \$83 billion and an unemployment rate across the state above six per cent does nothing to inspire confidence. Is it any wonder Queenslanders are bitterly disappointed with this budget? The LNP has a plan to deliver the health, the education services and the infrastructure to grow our regional and rural communities. We have a plan to reduce spiralling electricity costs and cost-of-living expenses because, at the end of the day, unlike those opposite, we are a party for all of Queensland.

(Time expired)