




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2018

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

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (8.26 pm): State budgets are about making choices—hard decisions about where public funds are best directed and invested. Budgets are an expression of what a government takes seriously and what it does not. Ultimately, budgets are about values. In the budget handed down by the Treasurer on Tuesday—and I congratulate the Treasurer—the Palaszczuk government has once again given a clear marker of our priorities for the state.

We are proud to say this is a Labor budget. It is a budget that delivers on our commitment to plan for Queensland's future and for the growth and development of this state. It is not the scorched earth approach of those opposite, with their agenda in government of cut, sack and sell. At the last two elections the people of Queensland gave their verdict on who they want to lead this state. That is because a Palaszczuk government offers a positive approach of investing sensibly and wisely in the future of our state and backing Queenslanders all the way regardless of where they live or the circumstances in which they find themselves.

In my portfolio this means investing in education, investing in the future of our children and grandchildren through both schools and early childhood education and care, giving our kids a great start in life and supporting our tireless teachers and educators every step of the way. It means investing to ensure that we have safe, fair and productive workplaces so that people can go to work, be treated well and return home safely at the end of the day.

I am delighted therefore to confirm that in this year's budget the Palaszczuk government has invested an overall record—once again—of \$14.1 billion across the early childhood, schooling and further education. We are making this investment because we know and recognise the importance of education. We know and recognise the value of fairness and safety at work. That is what I mean when I say budgets are an expression of our values, about making choices and setting priorities for the future of this state.

I have been listening intently to those opposite. It is really interesting that we have this so-called economic plan by the Leader of the Opposition. It is amazing what those opposite are going to do. They are going to build every road in Queensland. They are going to have the Bruce Highway, the Centenary Highway, the second M1, the Mount Gravatt road. They are going to build and duplicate every single road there is in Queensland known to mankind. They are going to reduce electricity costs, in spite of the fact that they rose 43 per cent under them—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Members, thank you. We are coming to the end.

Ms GRACE: It is interesting that they are going to bring retailers into the country area with their CSOs. I do not know whether they thought that through. Even today, Josh Frydenberg, the federal minister, issued a blunt warning to energy retailers after a report showed that public trust in energy retailers had hit a record low and that unless they sorted out issues, like price and reliability, they would see more intervention from the government. What do the LNP want to do now? Sic the retailers on to the good folk in regional Queensland who are looked after very well with their CSOs from what we have here.

But wait, there's more. They are going to build every hospital. And there's more. They are going to build every school. Every single member who got up in this place talked about what they need in schools. I have added it all up but I have lost count. It is just billions and billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars. Not only that, they are also going to air-condition them all, but they forgot to ask the education minister in the Newman government, because on 10 December 2014 it was reported—

The state government cannot afford to fit out every Queensland school with air-conditioning due to an estimated \$2 billion cost, says Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek.

That is what they said then. He said that there were other ways to keep Queenslanders cool, but all of a sudden the LNP are going to do it all with not one dollar allocated. They came in here and said that they were going to do every classroom but within five minutes they realised, 'Oops, that was a mistake. Sorry, we didn't mean to say that. It's actually every state classroom, not every classroom that is in the *Hansard*. It is every state classroom.' It was, 'Oops, we made a bit of a mistake.' What they do not know is that we have a cool school zone. We are working with communities. We will implement our advancing clean energy schools with solar panels which will save electricity and help them to conserve energy. We will do what we can to work with those communities to assist them in advancing air conditioning. This is already on track and we are looking at this as well.

Not only that, there's more. They are going to build every dam in Queensland at the same time. But wait, there's more. They are going to duplicate every rail line there is in Queensland at the same time. But wait, there's more. They are going to stop every drug dealer in Queensland. They are going to put an end to all of that. They are going to do all of that.

There is one big piece missing here. There was not one dollar allocated. They are going to do a magic pudding without any new taxes. They are going to backflip on renewable energy and they are going to get the AAA credit rating with it as well. This is amazing. Do we know how they are going to do it? They are going to partner with the federal government, partner with the councils, partner with the local government, partner with Seqwater and SunWater, and partner with the QCAA as well. They are going to deliver all of this in partnership. It is no wonder the Leader of the Opposition spoke about Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest in her speech, because that is where she thinks she is. I do not know who she thinks the Sheriff of Nottingham is, but she clearly thinks she is Robin Hood.

We have heard a lot about the taxes—the taxes that Labor took to the government, I might add. What are those taxes? There is a tax on luxury cars, so I do not think that would affect the ordinary person. There is a land tax for the top one per cent of landowners. There is an increase in overseas duty for units for overseas buyers, not Queensland buyers. The LNP do not like the point-of-consumption tax, whereby Unibet and all the corporate gamblers which do not pay any tax at all or contribute one dollar to the racing industry are making mega profits from it. The LNP do not even want them to pay their fair share so that the industry can expand.

What I loved even more was the continual attack on ATAR. I think there is a little part of ATAR that the LNP do not understand. For once, I would love the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow education minister to stand up for Queensland and Queensland students. They are going to borrow from New South Wales, but they do not realise that, even though English is counted as a subject for ATAR in New South Wales, the students do not have to pass it. There is no minimum pass. The LNP are going to take us backwards. We will have an ATAR where students have to pass English in order to get one. The LNP are going to go the New South Wales route where students do not have to pass English, where there is no minimum pass in order to get an ATAR. That is a little piece of information that somehow escapes those on the opposite side.

When it comes to independent public schools, this is all part of their great broad education plan. What I want to say about independent public schools is that, when the LNP left government, there were 130 and there are now 250. They grew under Labor. My view is quite clear. If they are that good and there is a great opportunity that we can share with other schools, then that is an opportunity lost if we do not do it for all the other schools. That is what we want to find out. If LNP members talk about how good they are and what they are delivering, then let us do it for the other schools as well. Let us share it. Let us look at the future of IPSs so that we can get those benefits and share them with all the other schools. That is clearly what the independent assessment is doing. That is what we will do in an open and transparent way. That is what we will deliver for the students of Queensland. I could go on—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Members!

Ms GRACE:—but I want to turn now to the details of the budget of the education portfolio and its various components as well as an overview of the great initiatives in my local electorate of McConnell that will flow from this budget. I cannot escape the simplistic plan of the LNP. There was not one dollar allocated to anything that they spoke about. They have a magic pudding that is going to develop everything here in Queensland. It is a tale of Robin Hood and it is a tale of Sherwood Forest.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech. I have sought leave from the Deputy Speaker and I have provided an electronic copy—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members, despite me trying to call order on several occasions, it was ignored. If that behaviour continues, I will warn everyone under the standing orders.

Ms GRACE: They are a bit of a joke over there. They just simply cannot take the truth.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for McConnell, it did not need a comment.

Ms GRACE: I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*. I have delivered an electronic copy. I have had the approval of the Deputy Speaker.

Division: Question put—That leave be granted.

In division—

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Thank you. Thank you, members. Members, I called the House to order three times. It is a division. Standing orders still apply.

AYES, 51:

ALP, 47—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lui, Lynham, Madden, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Miles, Miller, Mullen, B. O'Rourke, C. O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Pegg, Power, Pugh, Richards, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Stewart, Trad, Whiting.

Grn, 1—Berkman.

KAP, 1—Dametto.

PHON, 1—Andrew.

Ind, 1—Bolton.

NOES, 38:

LNP, 38—Batt, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyce, Costigan, Crandon, Crisafulli, Frecklington, Hart, Hunt, Janetzki, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Lister, Mander, McArdle, McDonald, Mickelberg, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Connor, Perrett, Powell, Purdie, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Sorensen, Stevens, Stuckey, Watts, Weir, Wilson.

Resolved in the affirmative.

I turn now to the details of the education portfolio budget and its various components, as well as an overview of the great initiatives in my local electorate of McConnel that will flow from this budget.

Education—schools

Mr Speaker, I am honoured to have taken on the role of Minister for Education, and I am extremely proud to be part of the Palaszczuk Government delivering more than \$12.8 billion in schools and early childhood education and care in 2018-19.

This State Budget delivers on the Palaszczuk Government's commitment to provide a quality education for all students throughout Queensland.

Not only will we have more teachers in our classrooms, they will be better trained and better prepared for their vitally important role.

This Budget also includes a record investment in school infrastructure of more than \$1 billion, which will see new schools and classrooms built where they are needed most.

Our teachers are critical when it comes to giving Queensland children a great start.

So, while the leader of the opposition thinks that we have an 'inefficient public service', the Palaszczuk Government is employing more than 1,000 extra teachers as part of our four-year commitment to employ more than 3,700 teachers—because we value our teachers and the vital work they do on the education frontline.

We are also investing \$107 million over three years in the Teaching Queensland's Future program to prepare and develop beginning teachers.

We're committing \$31 million over four years to create four Centres of Learning and Wellbeing to support staff in rural and remote Queensland, with the first two centres to open in Mount Isa and Roma next term.

We're also investing \$14.4 million to employ an additional 15 music teachers per year for the next four years.

The Budget will invest \$923 million in state school infrastructure and a further \$98.4 million in capital grant assistance for non-state schools.

There is an additional \$250 million boost to make our secondary schools '2020 Ready'.

In this budget we will also begin boosting the Building Future Schools Fund by \$308 million over six years from 2018-19, taking it to a total of \$808 million.

The Fund will deliver two new secondary colleges in the north and south of Brisbane's inner city—including a new high school in Fortitude Valley, in my electorate of McConnel.

Boosting the fund will allow six new schools to be built in key growth areas outside the inner city, including a new primary and secondary school at Ripley Valley, secondary schools at Coomera, Yarrabilba and Mango Hill, as well as building a new special school at Caboolture.

We've also committed \$210 million for school maintenance works in 2018-19 and an additional \$97 million for the Advancing Clean Energy Schools program to install solar and energy efficiency measures in state schools.

Together, these investments in teachers and infrastructure across our state highlight the Palaszczuk Government's conviction and delivers on our promise to provide Queensland students with the best educational opportunities for the future—a stark contrast to the regressive LNP 'back-to-basics' approach to education that the opposition leader has been calling for.

Early Childhood Education

Mr Speaker, the Palaszczuk Government is committed to giving all Queensland children a great start in life, no matter where they live or the circumstances they find themselves in.

We know that this requires work across a number of portfolio areas, including the absolutely vital area of early childhood education and care.

The early years before school time are a critical time in a child's development, so it's important we invest in quality programs that give them that great start.

I am delighted that this budget supports greater access to early childhood education and care, particularly for more vulnerable members of our community who would otherwise be in danger of missing out on these opportunities.

For example, the budget includes \$24.3 million in 2018-19 to support the operation of Early Years Places in more than 50 locations across the state.

These one-stop-shops provide vital services—including education, parenting and family support, child and maternal health services—for more than 14,000 Queensland children and 10,000 families.

Our Government has delivered on its commitment to establish seven new Early Years Places in Barcaldine, Blackall, Gordonvale, Inala, Lockhart River, Tara and in the Redlands.

We are also continuing to deliver greater access to kindergarten in up to 38 remote communities through the Remote Kindergarten Pilot Program in State Schools, with almost 100 children taking part in 2018.

This complements the \$1.9 million per annum eKindy program, which provided access to kindergarten through distance education for almost 200 Queensland children this year.

And Mr Speaker, I am delighted to announce that under this budget, my Department is commencing a 12-month pilot to offer a tailored kindergarten program to kindergarten-age patients of the Lady Cilento Hospital and the Mater Children's Private Brisbane Hospital.

This is a great initiative to support kids and their families who find themselves in very trying circumstances.

The pilot will be delivered by teachers from the Brisbane School of Distance Education in conjunction with the Lady Cilento Hospital School.

The program will initially involve an early childhood teacher providing one-on-one educational activities with children on the ward.

The initiative will be an investment of \$140,000 for the 12-month period.

I am also pleased to advise that families with children under one year old, will continue to receive 12 months free playgroup membership through continued delivery of the \$1.58 million Play Stars initiative—which is delivered in partnership with Playgroup Queensland.

Around 5,700 families have benefited from the Play Stars program since it began in July 2016, and more than 120 new playgroups have been created right across Queensland.

And there is \$4.5 million to continue refurbishment and enhancement of existing early childhood education and care facilities.

However, while the Palaszczuk Government continues to support early childhood and care in this state, we need the Turnbull Government to step up and fulfil its responsibilities for the early childhood sector.

As I have outlined to the House on a number of previous occasions, the Federal Government has failed again to provide any long-term funding certainty for the sector, with no funding under the National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education beyond 2019.

We have now had five short-term extensions to the original 2009 national partnership agreement.

And in their recent budget, the federal Government completely walked away—with no forewarning—from their commitments to fund the regulation of the sector under the National Partnership Agreement for the National Quality Agenda.

This is no way to run a sector that is so critical to our future.

Queensland families, Queensland children, and those who work so tirelessly in the early childhood sector deserve better than this from the Commonwealth Government.

Industrial Relations

Mr Speaker, the Palaszczuk Government implemented a fair and balanced industrial relations agenda in its first term in office, delivering in full on our 2015 election commitments to restore fairness and reverse the harsh cuts of the Newman Government era.

In this budget, our Government is continuing a positive agenda in support of safe, fair and productive workplaces in Queensland.

Key priorities for the Government and the Office of Industrial Relations in this year's Budget include:

- Implementation of the Queensland's landmark new labour hire licensing laws to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation and lift the standard and reputation of the labour hire industry. With just days left for labour hire providers to apply for their licence, the Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit has received almost 2000 licence applications.
- Investigating options for a portable long service leave scheme for social and community services workers in Queensland.
- Continuing to negotiate in good faith with public sector workers and their unions in the next round of bargaining and finalising agreements that provide fair and responsible wage outcomes.
- Continued oversight and regulation of Workplace Health and Safety in Queensland, including ongoing implementation of the recommendations from the Best Practice Review of WHS.
- Implementing recommendations from the 5-yearly review of the Workers' Compensation Scheme to ensure the scheme remains the best in the country and responds to the changing nature of the labour market.

Local electorate

Mr Speaker, in Brisbane's inner city and in my electorate of McConnel, this year's Budget supports game-changing developments that will generate jobs and support economic growth.

Queens Wharf, the proposed Eagle Street Pier, Howard Smith Wharves and Brisbane Live projects are heralding in a new era for our local area. Our Government will work with the private sector to see these projects to success.

The Palaszczuk Government is also delivering the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail project. During the five-year construction period, Cross River Rail will support an average of 1,500 jobs each year, and up to 3,000 jobs in the most intensive year of construction.

I'm proud to be delivering the first inner city state high school to be built in 50 years in my electorate of McConnel. The 2018-19 Budget commits \$81 million to deliver this exciting new flagship high school in Fortitude Valley.

Other local school investments include:

- \$10 million for a new building for the Queensland Ballet Academy
- \$3 million for additional classrooms at Kelvin Grove State College, as well as \$6 million for an indoor sports facility
- \$120,000 for a new outdoor learning centre at the Queensland Academy of Creative Industries
- \$466,000 for school maintenance and minor works.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, this is a budget in the best traditions of progressive Labor Governments.

This budget reflects our long-standing and dearly held values about the importance of education to give every child a great start and about fairness and safety in the workplace.

I commend it to the House.