




Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**

**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (8.00 pm): Just a few days ago the Treasurer stood on the other side of the House and declared, 'Whether you live in Brisbane or Blackall, this is a budget for all of Queensland.' How wrong that was. This budget is predominantly a budget for Brisbane. It does absolutely nothing to support the hardworking Queenslanders in the electorate of Gregory. It is a complete and utter failure for rural Queensland.

It was billed as a big win for Queensland. The Treasurer went on to say that there was a grand infrastructure spend in regional Queensland with a touted 65 per cent of infrastructure funds being spent outside the greater Brisbane area. However a casual glance at the budget papers showed worrying signs, and further investigation proved that the Treasurer's comments were at least misleading to the hardworking people of Gregory, especially those who toil away to produce the wealth that the Treasurer has squandered in her seat of South Brisbane.

In my electorate of Gregory there is no additional funding for new or upgraded schools. There is no funding for new road projects. For an electorate that covers more than 450,000 square kilometres, there is just \$2.9 million for hospital upgrades. The Central Highlands and central west hospital and health services will see no additional services and no renal dialysis chairs for any communities in the electorate of Gregory. To make matters worse, my constituents will be slugged with five new taxes, higher electricity prices, higher water bills, and more red and green tape for their small business and agricultural enterprises.

Education is paramount for a growing state. A quality education allows young people the opportunity to grow into whoever they desire. Regardless of their circumstances, quality education ensures that we get the best out of our state's young people, but, sadly, this budget ignores the Central Highlands and the central west students completely. The budget delivers \$668.4 million of new capital spend for schools throughout Queensland, but disappointingly there is not much going to schools in the electorate of Gregory.

Not one of my 58 state schools is receiving any additional funding from the budget for new classrooms or updated facilities. This is in comparison to more than \$195 million being spent on schools in Brisbane. It beggars belief that the Treasurer stood up on Tuesday and claimed 'at the heart of any Labor budget is education' and then went on to deliver a budget that does nothing to support rural Queensland students and does not deliver for Central Highlands or central west schools.

It is not just rural Queenslanders who are being failed by the government. Our schools statewide failed to meet the national minimum standards for year 3, year 5, year 7 and year 9 in 2017. This government has failed Queensland students by not supporting schools to grow and be the best they can be, by not developing better facilities and by failing to improve education standards.

The electorate of Gregory is crying out for better health services. Throughout Queensland our hospital and health services are at breaking point. The category 1, 2 and 3 emergency patients are not being seen within recommended clinical time frames and, with ambulance ramping up, a whopping 22 per cent of Queenslanders are being stuck in hospital waiting bays for longer than 30 minutes. These Queenslanders are not going to hospital with a sore toe or a sniffle; they are presenting at our emergency departments with immediate or potentially life-threatening injuries. The government has failed to keep Queenslanders safe and healthy.

This budget has not just failed Queenslanders needing to use their local hospital's emergency department. It has totally failed people in the electorate of Gregory. Rural Queensland is crying out for better health. Sadly, in the budget handed down by the Treasurer only a few days ago there is no new money for services for the Central Highlands or central west.

We have a serious issue in regard to renal dialysis services throughout the Central Highlands and central west. Currently there are no renal dialysis chairs in the region. This is impacting constituents dramatically, with one of my constituents travelling back and forth from Emerald to Rockhampton three times a week every week to receive dialysis treatment. I have also talked to a number of constituents who have left their families and friends in Longreach and moved to Townsville just so they can receive their treatment. I have made representation to the health minister in regard to this service, but clearly these pleas have fallen on deaf ears. It is devastating that this budget provides no additional services to my constituents.

Not only have services been forgotten by this budget for Brisbane; the biggest health failure in the budget is infrastructure. The big health investment in the electorate of Gregory was the announcement of the redevelopment of the Blackall Hospital, and I welcome that and thank the minister for putting that in the budget papers. However, there is a small issue with that announcement in the budget. The budget delivers only \$1 million for this project but it is a \$17 million development. Where is the other \$16 million and when is it going to be committed to Blackall Hospital? This is an utter failure for the community of Blackall, but what is more shocking is that \$1 million committed to the Blackall Hospital is the only new health investment in the Central Highlands and central west region. It is obvious that this budget is a budget for Brisbane and will do nothing for rural Queenslanders.

It was clear before Tuesday that the Labor Party has turned its back on Queensland's agricultural sector, and this budget proves it. There is no extra funding for Queensland farmers and graziers and only more red tape, regulation and green tape. There is nothing in this budget that assists the farmers and graziers who, putting it bluntly, have been thrown under the bus by this government with the recent vegetation management changes.

Farmers and graziers throughout regional Queensland have lost hundreds of millions of dollars off the value of their agricultural properties and have had thousands of hectares locked up and seen this city-centric Labor government declare our great state closed for business when it comes to building new high-value agricultural projects in Queensland. The only money we have seen that will help farmers and graziers who are battling these unfair vegetation management changes is \$4 million allocated to improving the Statewide Land Cover and Trees Study. Any farmer, grazier and agricultural scientist will tell you that the SLATS report is extremely inaccurate. Now that the government is locking up more and more land it is critical that this report is well funded and accurate. Four million dollars is a measly pittance that will not go nearly as far to build an accurate report into statewide land cover. It shows once and for all that the government holds farmers and graziers in total disregard and will not back them at all.

Even worse is the announcement snuck deep in the budget papers of funding for cluster fencing being halved to \$5 million over the next two years. Wild dogs, as we all know, have decimated the once booming sheep and wool industry in Western Queensland, and the drought was just another kick in the guts. Cluster fencing is working and it is working well. This is a game-changer for graziers who have seen lambing rates climb from 20 per cent to 90 per cent at a time when wool prices are at 1,500 cents per kilogram clean. It is helping restore confidence to the region and is bringing people back to towns like Longreach, Blackall, Yaraka, Isisford, Barcaldine and Muttaborra. These regions are struggling with the devastating drought which never seems to give. To make matters worse, they are stuck with a state government which is pushing them to the brink with red and green tape, and now it has halved the funding for cluster fencing. This is absolutely appalling, especially at a time when we should be increasing funding for cluster fencing to secure more and more pastoral land.

Labor's disappointing budget for Brisbane does not just stop at demonising the agricultural sector. It fails to deliver adequate water infrastructure for Queensland. While it is pleasing to see that the government has finally delivered funds to build Rookwood Weir after 871 days since the federal government announced the project, the state government has failed to take advantage of the \$3 billion in federal funding for water infrastructure. That is a failure to invest in Urannah Dam, Nullinga Dam,

Burdekin Falls Dam and a failure to duplicate the Ross River Dam pipeline. I state the above water projects because they are what the LNP went to the 2017 election with. We are committed to delivering water infrastructure projects that are vital for regional Queensland and that take full advantage of the \$3 billion on offer from the federal government.

The biggest blunder of this budget for Brisbane is the debt bomb that we are handing over to our children and grandchildren and the extra taxes that we are slugging on hardworking Queenslanders. That is \$2.25 billion in new taxes and fees over the next four years for every single Queenslanders. Car stamp duty is being increased, property investors are being taxed, land tax is increasing, there is a new tax on betting and of course there is the famous waste tax.

The waste tax, which the Treasurer claims will not cost residents anything, is budgeted to bring in a whopping \$1.32 billion. The Treasurer now tries to cover this up by saying that it is not a tax on Queenslanders. The Treasurer does not seem to understand that if you tax Queenslanders—whether it be directly, through imposts on local councils or by taxing waste—you rip dollars out of their pockets, meaning less money to be spent in their local communities. Even with five new taxes, Queensland's debt has ballooned to \$83 billion. That is \$3.7 billion in interest alone every year, \$71 million a week and \$10 million a day. Just think how much we could invest in regional Queensland roads and hospitals if we were not paying the debt back.

There are winners in this budget. Yes, there are. It is the constituents of South Brisbane who are the big winners. This budget provides \$776 million for the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. This is a project that has been knocked back by Infrastructure Australia—knocked back because the government's business case projected growth that is seven times faster than actual growth, knocked back because they found more than 20 instances of unsubstantiated opinions, assertions or errors, and knocked back because it does not meet the basic cost-benefit ratios, with the cost of the project likely to exceed the benefits.

There is more. There is \$17.3 million for a three-metre-wide bike track—the V1 Veloway—with a total project cost of \$45 million. Just for comparison, we could seal the remaining section of the Blackall Jericho Road and upgrade the Bauhinia Downs to Duaringa road. We could also continue to seal the Longreach to Muttaborra road and continue to seal the Tambo to Springsure road. This would provide all-weather access to more communities in the electorate of Gregory for vastly less than this cycleway. I suppose that is the benefit of being the Treasurer—you can spend big in your own electorate and throw rural Queensland to the kerbside.

The Treasurer has handed down a budget purely for Brisbane. The Treasurer has failed on delivering for my constituents in Gregory. The Treasurer has failed on delivering for better schools, better hospitals, better roads and a better state. She should be ashamed of her budget for Brisbane that has utterly failed rural Queenslanders.

Just before I finish, I would like to speak as the shadow minister for fire, emergency services and volunteers. It is good to see that the state government is finally supporting our local fire and emergency services and I commend the minister on his commitment to that. There is over \$82 million invested in facilities, fire appliances, communications and equipment. Finally, regional Queensland is seeing an investment in fire and emergency services, including in Esk, Childers and Richmond. The member for Glass House would be happy to see money for the new emergency services facility at Maleny as well. I think that is wise money being spent on our first responders who do a fantastic job. As we go into the winter months and the feed dries off, one of our biggest issues is bushfires, and we need our first responders in the fire and emergency services to have the right equipment to make sure they can continue to provide an absolutely excellent service. I do welcome that.

I have spoken to the minister about our desperate need for a new fire station in Longreach. I know that the state government does own the land, and I know there are some preliminary discussions on that. We need to make sure we get that project into next year's budget so that the people of Longreach who are dedicated to the fire service have the facility that they need today. The Emerald Fire Station on Andrews Road is an excellent facility, and I think we need a similar facility in the Longreach area.

We need to continue working with the Alpha fire brigade to make sure they have the right equipment and access. We have a new fire station there, but we need to make sure they have the right training facilities so they can continue to train. We need to remember that a lot of these bush firefighters are volunteers and they do it because they are dedicated to their service. They have full-time jobs themselves and they do an excellent job. There is nothing better than going around and catching up with them and seeing their dedication.

We need to continue to support our rural firefighters, the SES and every volunteer in Queensland. There are a massive number of people who volunteer in our state. The government needs to make sure they have support, and I certainly welcome the additional funding that the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services has given to our fire and emergency services in this year's budget.