




Speech By  
**Samuel O'Connor**

**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (3.46 pm): Like the member for Nanango, I want Queensland to be a state of opportunity. I want Queensland to be a place where every person has an equal chance to live the life they want to live. As a young Queenslander, this budget does not give me hope for a future like that. First and foremost, we are being left to foot the bill for an extraordinary amount of debt. A major concern for young people is whether they can find a job and, further to that, a full-time job. Without a job, many of those things that we take for granted are completely out of their reach—things like financial certainty, being able to live without having to check your bank account every week or to start putting bills on the credit card and the ability to get a mortgage and to own a home, something our parents and grandparents had a much easier time doing.

All of that is under threat. Queensland has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation and the last figures I saw for my electorate of Bonney show that we have it worse than any other part of the Gold Coast, with a rate of 7.2 per cent. That is over 2,000 people unemployed. One way of addressing this is through the Back to Work SEQ program. It offers incentives of \$15,000 for businesses to put on long-term unemployed jobseekers and \$20,000 to employ young or mature age jobseekers who have been unemployed for at least four weeks. The businesses have to keep them on for at least a year, and rightly so. I am sorry to say that this budget contains savage cuts for the program from 1 July. Having 'South-East Queensland' in the title will be completely misleading from that date.

Unemployed jobseekers from the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Brisbane local government areas—where most of the population in this state lives—will no longer be eligible. This is in the context of youth unemployment in the double digits in Brisbane and on the Sunshine Coast and sitting at around 8.4 per cent on the Gold Coast. I have already had a job agency on the Gold Coast contact me to say how disappointed it is at this decision and how important this funding was to help businesses hire new staff. The government should be doing everything it can to drive down unemployment, but for those looking for work on the Gold Coast they have been badly let down.

We have also seen a cut to the first home buyers grant to the tune of \$5,000. This is no small amount to a young person saving for their first deposit. Many will be impacted, most likely those who can least afford to take the hit. That is without even factoring in the added cost of construction that will be imposed by the new waste tax or even the potential impacts of the changes to the vegetation management laws.

The people of my electorate of Bonney have the chance to live a great life—one that is close to the water; transport; the Gold Coast's major university and hospital; fantastic state schools and their only private school, AB Paterson College; and major shopping centres all within commuting distance to Brisbane. The opportunity that the people of the electorate of Bonney will have to enjoy all of those things will be secured only through smart spending. If members could not tell already, I would not call this budget an example of that.

The M1 is nearing capacity. In its present form it was built and almost fully funded by a state government, thanks to Premier Borbidge—a man who knew how to get on with the job, to not manufacture a fight with Canberra, or make excuses. That is in stark contrast to the antics that we have seen from those opposite until they were finally forced into agreeing to come on board with the federal government. I welcome the investment into the M1, but it will be simply not enough to keep adding extra lanes. We need to sort out the congested off-ramps of the M1, of which exit 57 is a good start. To borrow the slogan of my good friend the member for Theodore, in this vicinity we need slip lanes, not solar panels.

The Gold Coast needs an alternate route—a second M1 or Coomera connector. That could take up to 60,000 cars a day off the main route to Brisbane and provide transport security for my region. I note that there is \$56 million in the budget for construction in the south coast region and I will be doing everything I can to have some of that funding put towards upgrading the intersections of Brisbane Road and Olsen Avenue and Oxley Drive, and Pine Ridge Road and Captain Cook Drive. I welcome any investment from the City of Gold Coast towards upgrading the local roads in these areas. Everyone is sick and tired of being stuck in traffic there and waiting for several light changes before they can get to the other side of the intersection.

Another major threat to the lifestyle of the people of the Bonney electorate is rising crime rates. For example, Labrador is a suburb that has everything at its fingertips. It has some of the most beautiful coastline on the Gold Coast along the iconic Broadwater. It has the centrality to give Labradorians easy access to all the education, health and other infrastructure they need. Yet Labrador still struggles to lose its reputation as one of the crime hot spots for the Gold Coast. Labrador has double to triple the crime rate of its neighbouring suburbs and, in recent years, nothing has significantly changed. In the past 12 months alone there have been 1,820 offences committed in the suburb. Labrador is not a central district like Southport or Surfers Paradise; it is predominantly a suburban area. This situation cannot go on. The only way it can be fixed is with a numerically greater and more localised police presence in the area.

I was happy to see the government committing \$2.4 million to finally get on with building the police hub in Arundel six months after purchasing land there. With the Gold Coast so geographically long, it makes sense to have a station for officers to deploy from and a large evidence storage in the middle of the Gold Coast. However, I think the lack of clarity around a time line for the project is a demonstration that Labor does not hold this infrastructure as a high priority. There is also a real concern that the Rapid Action Patrol squad will not even get to call this new facility home, with the report evaluating that squad still remaining a secret.

There is also only 14 water police for the entire Gold Coast region. I found out through an answer to a question on notice that the Gold Coast has had this same number since 2006. That is over a decade with no increase in staffing for one of the busiest waterways in the country. Even almost two decades ago—in the year 2000—that figure sat at just 12 officers. Boaties pay huge amounts of registration, so they expect the government to reinvest at least some of that money back into services to make their experiences better, particularly when it comes to safety on the water. With increasing rates of boat ownership and our waterways getting busier and busier, we need our police numbers to keep up.

I think that every member would agree that education is one of the most important areas for a government to focus on. The LNP has committed to something that Queenslanders have long been crying out for: air-conditioning every classroom in our state schools. The number of people I have spoken to who bring up this issue is huge. If we look through the feedback to any major school upgrade, one of the most common comments will be, 'What about air conditioning?' Teachers have said that, during the summer months, the afternoon hours after lunch are a write-off in terms of teaching and learning. There has been a major focus of schools in my area on how attendance impacts a student's overall performance. The government's own every day counts report gives the statistic that one missing day per fortnight equals missing one year of learning by the end of a child's schooling. When teachers are writing off a least an hour a day for much of terms 1 and 4, we are going to see similar outcomes.

In terms of school infrastructure, I was glad to see funding for Southport State High School to provide much needed new classrooms. However, it is disappointing to see no new funding for every other school that I represent. That is in contrast to the desperately needed money that has been budgeted for schools on the northern Gold Coast as Labor plays catch-up in one of the fastest-growing regions in our nation.

The news is not as good for many of the more central Gold Coast schools, of which a large proportion of their facilities are temporary accommodation—portable demountable classrooms. Arundel State School and Coombabah State High School fit this category as well as Biggera Waters State School, as my good friend the member for Broadwater mentioned yesterday. I will keep fighting to have permanent buildings in place at these schools.

Labrador State School and Musgrave Hill State School are in a similar situation, but those schools have older buildings that need upgrading. Despite that, I look forward to seeing previously announced projects, such as the new library for Southport State High School, the shared prep and special needs playground for Labrador State School, the hall upgrade at Arundel State School, the new playground at Musgrave Hill State School and shade covers at Coombabah State High School come to fruition within the 2018-19 financial year as confirmed by the minister.

The budget also provides the final amount of funding for the Gold Coast Hockey Centre, which is the home of the mighty Labrador Tigerstix, with \$1.3 million for that club's post Commonwealth Games conversion. That club will soon have a new full-size grass pitch, a larger junior development area for their fantastic program for young players and new technical benches and dugouts will also be built. The other local sporting clubs in my area have not fared as well. The Parkwood Sharks was promised world-class upgrades to its field, but it ended up with only some Commonwealth Games-branded goalpost pads.

I will be keeping a close eye on the other remaining legacy projects of the games, in particular, the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct. The authority in charge of business and economic growth, Economic Development Queensland, is facilitating that project. It worries me that EDQ has failed to deliver on its measures of effectiveness. It misses targets to facilitate private sector investment projects by 40 per cent—a staggering \$120 million of investment. One would think that that type of underperformance would be a concern to EDQ. Fortunately, EDQ has a simple solution: just shift the goalposts. It got rid of four other measures of how it was tracking after failing to achieve three of them. I hope EDQ does not bring that same record of management to the GCHKP.

The health and knowledge precinct has the chance to be a hub of innovation and a new and highly desirable residential estate. Its location right next to Griffith University and the Gold Coast University Hospital as well as the Gold Coast Private Hospital is second to none. It could be a longstanding legacy of the 2018 games and I am keen to see the precinct developed. Yet the information that Labor has provided for its plans for the precinct is vague and unclear. The government should be doing whatever it takes to base the right companies at that precinct. Without careful management, this precinct will no soon longer be an asset but a monument to a lack of planning and understanding of my local area. Last year, \$35.1 million was listed as the total spend for the health and knowledge precinct. This year, the spend comes in lower at \$29.4 million. I hope the government is taking this precinct seriously and doing everything in its power to help it reach its potential.

The largest part of the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service, the Gold Coast University Hospital, is located in my electorate. As we see every year, there is a record Health budget—a 7.4 per cent increase. We are yet to see the government get anywhere near the funding increases of past years, which were 16.43 per cent in 2013-14 and a further 10.37 per cent in 2014-15. I hope that the increase in this budget can ensure that all emergency department performance measures are met and that we can improve the category 2 and 3 figures. I applaud all of our healthcare workers and thank them for their hard work on the front line.

One of the biggest issues for Queenslanders is managing their cost of living. The proposed waste levy is completely unnecessary. The government continues to pretend that this levy is the same one that Queenslanders paid back in 2011. The government's new tax is twice as much per tonne as the previous waste levy. The government says that there will be no direct impact of this tax on households, yet every person who goes to the tip will now have to pay. How is that not a direct impact?

The Gold Coast City Council has already taken its own measures to ensure that residents are maximising their recycling opportunities. The council is showing that we can take action in this space without imposing a new tax. This month, Recycle Street opened at the Helensvale Waste and Recycling Centre. It aims to promote positive recycling and waste disposal behaviours within the community. It is a self-service street with colour-coded shopfronts for every type of recycled material. It is doing exactly what this tax grab aims to do: ensuring that the level of our avoidable waste is lowered by maximising the opportunities for recycling.

They also have measures to ensure commercial enterprises are not using the free access as dumping grounds. The Gold Coast has shown that there is no need to have a waste levy, particularly not one that is as far reaching as Labor's. When one-third of the revenue goes towards general revenue, it is an unnecessary burden on Queenslanders and an extra tax grab by Labor.

I stand here to represent the people of Bonney. Whilst I appreciate the money that is going into my area, I think the lack of planning by this Labor government has been shown up in the budget. Whether it be on employment, transport, crime, education, sports and recreation or the cost of living, we need strong planning and a clear vision to ensure that this is a state of opportunity for every Queenslander.