




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.20 pm): We all should be concerned about what we have seen in the last couple of days about Labor's economic plan, which is more taxes and fees—some \$2.25 billion in new taxes and fees for Queenslanders. We know that these taxes will destroy jobs in the Bundaberg region and cost Queenslanders more. What is of concern is that, after four Labor budgets, we do not see an economic plan.

Let us have a look at the five new taxes worth \$2.25 billion, and remember that the election costings were for around \$500 million. The new taxes are: the waste tax, \$1.3 billion; the wagering tax, \$367 million; the land tax, \$311 million; the property investors' tax, \$132 million; and the car stamp duty, \$100 million. There are also four new fees on vets, homestay international students, labour hire companies and hazard perception. There is a higher unemployment rate in this budget of 6.25 per cent across Queensland, but let us not forget that the youth unemployment rate locally in my part of the world in the Wide Bay is nearly 30 per cent.

The predictions of this \$83 billion debt liability for every Queenslanders are disturbing, and we all know how damaging that is for our future. Let us remember that this is \$3.7 billion worth of interest each and every year, and this equates to \$71 million every week, \$10 million a day, \$420,000 every hour or \$7,000 every minute. That is the liability for Queenslanders for many generations. The 2018 Queensland budget is proof that Labor not only does not understand but does not care about the farmers in the Bundaberg region and the rural and regional communities they support. The only additional information from this budget for Queensland farmers is funding to increase regulation and red and green tape that will continue to suffocate our agricultural sector. This budget is not about supporting Queensland farmers; it is about protecting Labor politicians in seats in South-East Queensland by making it harder for farmers to farm in the future.

Interestingly enough, we see the much needed investment of \$4 million to fix and establish a scientific program called SLATS, which we know was the flawed program that this government used to destroy agricultural production in Queensland through the regressive vegetation management reforms. We are now spending \$4 million of taxpayers' money to fix a program that was flawed but was used in this House to destroy regional Queensland. The local fruit fly trail in my region has again been announced in this budget. It has already been spent, and \$400,000 is not enough. That needs to be doubled and we need to make sure that our regional areas continue to get support in this very important area.

We know that new home buyers in the Bundaberg region will be worse off from this week's budget. The removal of the \$5,000 first home owners boost at the end of the month, the introduction of the \$70-a-tonne waste levy, increasing to \$90 a tonne, and increases in land tax will all make it harder for new home buyers in my area to make it and to get a leg up. Housing affordability clearly is not a priority for this government. At a time when new work in the home building industry is slowing and

population growth is picking up, Queensland needs policies and programs that will support the future demand for housing—not more costs on the already over taxed new home building projects. Regional Queensland towns like Bundaberg are likely to be the hardest hit by these measures.

In replying to the budget, we must address the waste tax, as the Local Government Association of Queensland has publically rejected the Palaszczuk government's plans to apply a waste levy on all domestic and household waste. Not one person in my electorate was aware of a wheelie bin tax being introduced prior to the election. We continue to see the conversation about our needs for a level 5 hospital in my area. We are over the planning and business case issues; we just need to get on with it. Additional works at the port of Bundaberg need to be progressed as a key economic driver for the region. Our per capita spend is insulting. At nearly \$600 million, it is the second lowest in regional Queensland even though we have the second highest geographical base of population.

I welcome the advocacy we have had for additional music teachers across the state, particularly in my area where we have remote schools. For years, we have seen the need for additional resources, particularly in the remote areas of my electorate. We have seen the haves and the have-nots in the schooling system. I want to acknowledge the schools in the northern part of my electorate which hopefully will get access to these teachers. We all know how important music and other extracurricular activities are for teachers and students.

I want to acknowledge the extra money for the additional school transport infrastructure program. This will allow the Agnes Water State School disaster—which is the drop off and pick up area—to be funded and we now need the council to get on with the job, as per the government's fifty-fifty funding option. With \$20 million, we can get some of this and fix this dangerous situation for those children and parents at the Agnes Water State School.

The Mon Repos Turtle Centre has maintained its necessary funding. I must remind the House that this was announced in the LNP government and we continue to have the announcement every budget. We have not awarded a contract yet and now we are forecasting the bill to be \$17.5 million. It is not that I am worried, but it was budgeted at \$8 million when we announced it in 2015 and I just want the thing built. The people who deal with nesting sea turtles and the conservation of this very important iconic species want to make sure that this project becomes a reality. Can we just get on and award the contract and make sure these projects are no longer talked about but delivered?

Work on the North South Road, which was mainly funded by the federal government, is nearly finished but it was announced again anyway. I do welcome Gooburrum State School finally receiving funding for additional classrooms, and hopefully the toilet facilities will be a reality in this budget. For the benefit of the members of the House, this is a result of the 2013 floods where we used this school as an evacuation centre during those horrific flood events. These state schools need our support to make sure their facilities are world class so our children can get the best curriculum outcomes.

The funding at the Elliott Heads foreshore development is much needed. The fire station in Childers is nearly finished. I was there the other day and the paint is still wet, but it is in the budget again and we want to make sure that our hardworking fire men and women can open this project sooner rather than later. We will wait for the Labor ministers to come up and cut a ribbon on it again, but it is great to see that it continues to be announced in the budget.

A new initiative this year which we welcome is the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program, which is contributing to our cultural heritage and values. Our area has been advocating for Bundaberg to get more land and sea rangers. This is a very important part of the coast as part of the PCC environmental protection area. We are delighted that this advocacy for those local Indigenous groups has finally been reflected in the budget.

When we reflect on the disaster of Labor budgets for Queensland, we must provide our electorates with an alternative. That is why I was delighted to hear today about a real economic plan for Queensland that will create jobs, cut the cost of living and improve our schools and hospitals. All we have seen in the last 3½ years is more tax, debt and unemployment, particularly in my electorate. We must deliver a plan—a plan designed to make it easier for Queenslanders to get a job and get ahead.

We heard today about the real economic plan from the LNP. We will bust congestion, provide cheaper electricity, ensure better health and education services, deliver water security and guarantee no new taxes. We must help businesses grow and create jobs in every corner of the state.

The LNP has said today that we will improve education for our students and health care for our sick. We must make sure that our sick and our children become our priority. We want to build communities that are secure and strong, as we reflect on the strong history of success of previous LNP governments.

The LNP's plan for cheaper electricity is a real plan, a real policy. We will boost competition by restructuring government owned power generators from two to three entities. We will introduce regional electricity retail competition. Why that did not happen years ago is beyond any of us. We will mandate investment in affordable green energy by government owned electricity companies, which is something we all must focus on. We must make sure they stand up and are sustainable. We must be proud of them going into the future. They need a good mix of not only coal but renewables.

The LNP's plan for better health and education services includes: introducing incentive based funding for health and hospital boards to improve patient care; partnering with the private sector to reduce surgery waiting times; and tackling the ice addiction by building four new rehab centres and targeting drug gangs. I want to thank the IWC, who are here for the Bundy promotions night in Parliament House tonight. They have been a really strong advocate and have continued lobbying over many years. They will be delighted to know that the LNP has committed to four new ice rehab centres across the state. We have to acknowledge real action and real community advocacy so that we stop the scourge of ice taking further hold in our communities.

The LNP's plan for better health and education services also includes rolling out the independent public schools initiative to empower principals and school communities to make those decisions. We do not need bureaucrats telling them how to run their schools. We also have a back-to-basics plan to declutter the curriculum and ease the pressure on teachers. We must make English a mandatory component of the new ATAR tertiary education entrance system.

We have made a huge commitment, even for the Bundaberg community, that we will air-condition every public school classroom in Queensland. Many parents and P&Cs from around my electorate will be delighted that finally one side of politics has listened and is prepared to fund this important initiative. All of us on this side of the House have fought hard for this and we are glad that all the hard work is going to pay off. This is about students, teachers and learning outcomes, and we must provide an environment where they can thrive and be the best they can.

Let's talk about water security and the progressing of new dams. We have been developing a long-term water strategy to safeguard supply and support local jobs. Can honourable members understand how frustrated the farmers in the agriculture and high-value agriculture areas in Queensland must be due to not knowing from one cycle to the next what governments are going to do, what they are going to say or what they are not going to do about water security for this great state? Water is the lifeblood of our community.

The LNP's plan for lower taxes includes: a guarantee that no new taxes will be introduced by a future LNP government; ensuring government assistance prioritises Queensland based businesses; and fighting for a fairer GST proportion by pushing for royalties to be excluded from the distribution model. While the issues of the budget crisis are being realised, I need to reflect on the budget of my shadow portfolio of Child Safety, Youth, Women and the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Labor's child safety crisis continues as funding has failed to keep up with the standards in not only the 2017-18 budget but also this budget. Labor have also finally signed up to the national redress scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse, but no funding has been allocated to their \$500 million announcement. I know it is dependent on the federal government. However, after a year of waiting we hope it is not a cruel hoax on those survivors. I think we should have money in the budget; we should be fair dinkum about addressing this issue and not paying lip-service by not even having a line item with money allocated to it.

They are also failing to deal with the revolving-door youth justice system. An amount of \$40.7 million is being spent over four years to deal with detention capacity and issues with remand. That is on top of the \$40 million over two years to support 'children and young people with complex and challenging behaviours'. They have no real solutions other than throwing taxpayers' money at the issue and hoping it goes away. After some 60 reviews, I think it is time that we do so much better in dealing with child safety in this state.

Labor's business as usual approach will not sort out Queensland's youth justice system. This is on top of their completely bungled attempt to transfer 17-year-old prisoners from adult jails to youth detention centres without a proper plan, as well as their youth bail house initiative, which puts community safety at risk and does not help to rehabilitate the offender at all. Urgent reforms to the blue card system have not been implemented and do not look like being done any time soon as there is no clear date outlined. We must do better.

In closing, I want to talk about our veterans, returning men and women—those hardworking people who have given so much for our country. We were so disappointed to see in this year's budget only \$200,000 over two years for an online portal for information sharing and \$2.6 million to refurbish a government owned building in Townsville. There is half-price public transport for veterans, a great LNP

policy that we are happy the government has copied. We want to make sure that there is a real plan, a real policy in place that reflects the appropriate respect for our returning men and women, who have done so much. I do encourage the government to consider the LNP's policy taken to the last election about making sure that veterans do matter in any future policy.

With those words I close. Of course, we do say to our electorates that we will continue to fight for what is important to our electorates, and that is a fair share of the distribution of funds across regional Queensland.