




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2019

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (4.35 pm): I rise to support the bills. In listening to the debate across the chamber, I have this funny feeling that a lot of them are suffering from amnesia when it comes to what they were able to do when they were in government. We can talk and pontificate about all of the things that we would like to see, but budgets are serious business. Running the state of Queensland with the enormity of the size of this state compared to the size of Victoria—the roads expenses and the rest—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much cross-chamber chatter. The minister is not taking interjections. She is not being provocative. She is on her feet. Please let her start her contribution in silence.

Ms GRACE: They never like to hear what I have to say.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I just asked for silence, members.

Ms GRACE: We heard the member for Caloundra talk just now about the dark days of the Blich government. Let me remind them of the dark days of the Campbell Newman government—drunk on power and arrogant beyond belief. There was not one community interest organisation that they did not put offside, not one. I had never experienced it in my whole life of being involved in politics in this state—the manner in which they governed Queensland and how immediately they took the benches they turned their back on what they said they were going to do when elected. The treatment of our seven members who were in this House was despicable. The manner in which they dealt with the public was absolutely unbelievable. You can talk to any business or community organisation you like and they will say exactly the same thing.

I remember the can-do Campbell attitude of their four pillars before they were elected. I remember a few of those pillars. One of them was, 'We're going to revitalise front-line services.' We know what they did with that first pillar. Like Samson, they knocked it down. That pillar was gone. Another one was, 'We're going to cut waste.' All they did was cut services. They closed the Barrett Adolescent Centre. They gagged community organisations and there were cuts to community groups that offered services out in the community. That pillar also went out the window. Another one of their pillars was, 'We're going to have accountability in government.' Like Samson, they knocked that one down as well. All we heard about was gags and cuts. That is all there was.

They must think that somehow Queensland operates in a bubble—that we have a block wall at our border—to somehow suggest that they are going to deliver all of the things that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about in her speech without any attention to Australia's economic performance, which is going to have an impact on Queensland, or to the world's economic performance. Everyone in

Australia is saying that our economy at the moment is worse than when we had the global financial crisis. That is saying something. Read the newspapers. You quote them in here all the time. Read the economic newspapers and what they are saying.

If you think we can live in a bubble with no relationship to Queensland's economy, the GST income that we receive and the housing market, which is spread right across Australia, then you are living a dream. All that we hear from those opposite is a dream. 'We're going to give everybody jobs.' The unemployment rate was higher under them than it is now. 'We're going to give every youth a job and train everybody.' Youth unemployment was the highest it had ever been under them. 'We're going to air-condition every classroom.' That is interesting. I heard the member for Surfers Paradise talk about air-conditioning every classroom in the state, but when he was the minister we could not afford it. I have a press release dated December 2014.

He said that of course communities would like to have air conditioning. That is what he said then. It is completely different to what he said now. When reality hits it is a little bit different. He also said that because 'there is limited money ... we have to try to balance a budget'. He could not do it then—

Mr Hinchliffe: Maybe that is why they wanted to close all the schools.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection. That is why they were closing all the schools. That is why they failed to employ the teachers that we needed and cut the number of teachers who were needed in the classrooms. In the 2014 press release he also said that 'estimates have shown' it would cost \$2 billion. Now, all of a sudden with more classrooms the figures change, but the big difference between their policy and ours is that ours is fully costed. We still do not know how they are going to fund theirs.

Every member in this House comes and sees me and they all want new schools. They all want refurbishments. They all want new classrooms. They all want new buildings. They all want fences. They all want painting. They all want maintenance. All of that went down under those opposite. The maintenance budget was at its lowest when they were in government. Classroom sizes started to grow when they were in government. The ratio of teachers to students in classrooms started to expand because they failed to employ the teachers that were needed, yet all of a sudden with all of those pressures they think they are going to be able to do the lot. It is pie in the sky. They know it, and the people of Queensland know it because they are smarter. They understand what it takes to deliver services in this state. They understand what happened when they were in government, and we will remind them every step of the way.

They talk about debt in the budget, yet I hear nothing about the doubling of the debt federally since the Morrison government came into power. I hear nothing about the Brisbane City Council, which is nearly doubling its debt because it wants to borrow for capital investment as well. That is exactly what we are doing in this budget. The difference is that Queensland's debt includes our government owned corporations, which we own. New South Wales and Victoria do not include the debt for government owned corporations. You are not comparing apples with apples. Our GOC's debt is 54 per cent of the debt in this state and 46 per cent is general government, which is what is reported in New South Wales and Victoria. You cannot compare apples with apples because they do not have them. They sold their assets. We include ours, and that is why there is a difference. They do not realise that in relation to everything that is happening in this state they are in their own little bubble.

Queensland delivered for the Morrison government, and now we want to see him deliver for us. They delivered for him, and it is about time he put his hand in his pocket and delivered for us as well. There is nothing wrong with Queensland asking for our fair share. This is a budget for the regions. This is a budget for jobs and infrastructure. As the education minister I am proud, because this is a fantastic Education budget and a record Health budget to look after the sick and needy in this state.

As one who has lived in Brisbane all my life, I have seen the area grow and change so much. I am really pleased to say that the budget delivers the schools and transport infrastructure in McConnel that we need. With the capital city in this state growing the way that it is, you need a second rail crossing. We are nearly at capacity. If you do not have a city that thrives, Queensland suffers because of that when we have international visitors. If they think the regions are going to gain by somehow starving Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, they live in la-la land. That is how arrogant they are. On this side we understand that you have to do both: you have to help the regions and you have to do what you have to do in your growing cities as well. That is exactly what this budget delivers.

I am proud that, with people moving in, there is strong enrolment growth in my schools and that we are investing nearly \$100 million in new schools. The Fortitude Valley State Secondary College is on a site that was previously up for sale. In my electorate there are apartments going up everywhere. I could not believe that they put a block of prime real estate which was necessary for schooling up for sale. Thank goodness we saved it. I was there with the Premier and Deputy Premier this week, and we saw the progress of the wonderful Fortitude Valley State Secondary College which is being built. The

buzz amongst the children is unbelievable. There are 200 people working on that site. I am also very proud to say that New Farm and McConnel will receive funding for new classrooms, with \$14 million for Brisbane Central and \$13 million for New Farm. I am looking forward to working with those communities so that we can design and produce fantastic additional infrastructure there as well. There is \$350,000 for an outdoor centre for the Queensland Academy for Creative Industries at Kelvin Grove. I am also pleased that Kelvin Grove, which is growing at an incredible rate, is also getting an injection of around \$23 million to finish the ballet academy and multipurpose courts.

I could go on. There is so much good news in this budget for education. There is so much good news in this budget for teachers and teacher aides, infrastructure, health and Cross River Rail, which is much needed in this state. Economic and other benefits will come to the regions from the cuts we have made to payroll tax. This is a budget that is grounded in reality. This is a budget that does not put Queensland in a bubble. This is a budget that understands the economic conditions worldwide and in Australia. This is a budget that will deliver jobs, education, health and infrastructure. I commend the bill to the House.