



Speech By  
**Bart Mellish**


**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

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## **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

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 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (12.53 pm): Strong borders equals a strong economy. The world has been shaken by the global COVID-19 pandemic and its unprecedented impact upon our economy, health and lives. We are facing some of the strongest global economic headwinds in living memory, and our state is not immune. We have a strong plan for economic recovery—a plan that ensures we can unite and recover, creating jobs and investing in our communities. We have a plan to invest in job-creating infrastructure, back small Queensland businesses, kickstart our manufacturing industry and support jobs by buying locally.

Queensland entered this crisis with stronger economic and population growth than the rest of Australia and improving labour market conditions. More than 250,000 jobs have been created since January 2015 and the trend unemployment rate had fallen to 5.7 per cent. We acted swiftly in response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst senior members opposite were calling COVID-19 a scare campaign, we were rolling out our health and economic response.

Whilst others were minimising the potential health risks, we were delivering a \$1.2 billion health package including expanded fever clinics, boosted emergency department capacity, acute care services and increased assistance for regional and remote communities. We have been rolling out payroll tax relief of almost a billion dollars, almost \$200 million for small business adaptation grants, \$400 million in support for commercial and retail tenants, and much more. Let us not forget that we have exempted JobKeeper recipients from payroll tax calculations, something the federal government has not done for income tax calculations.

Locally, many small businesses in my area on the north side have benefited. I hosted a small business forum—I thank the Minister for Small Business for jointly hosting my forum—and a northside jobs forum at the Geebung Bowls Club. Many small businesses I have visited have received some of our grants, helping them to keep going and also adapt to changing circumstances.

We are rolling out great projects to keep locals in jobs on the north side—hundreds of jobs. We have a capital program of works locally at the Beams Road overpass. We have the Northside Indoor Sports Centre, which employs dozens of workers. We have new jobs in Zillmere, whereas those opposite cut jobs in Zillmere and sacked over 50 people with the closure of the QFleet workshop and the shutting down of the SDS warehouse. We are bringing back jobs to Zillmere and back to the Aspley electorate.

We lack big-scale federal investment. We have a few projects on the horizon, but Linkfield Road is a perfect example. Almost two years ago the Prime Minister stood on the border of Bridgeman Downs, Carseldine and Bald Hills and promised to fix this intersection. Of the \$100 million, guess how much they have actually delivered to the state. They have delivered only \$6 million. We are doing the heavy lifting on infrastructure, local projects and jobs. When we commit to a project, we give a starting date.

The Beams Road rail overpass will start in 2021. The Carseldine park-and-ride upgrade is underway, the Geebung park-and-ride is underway, Aspley State High School's new sports hall and arts centre is underway, and the Northside Indoor Sports Centre is underway. We are delivering jobs now, not in the future.

Bizarrely, yesterday I heard the member for Burleigh say that there is little investment in his electorate apart from the billions of dollars for projects such as light rail. He actually listed light rail but said that there is not much apart from that. The opposition clearly thinks big infrastructure projects fall from the sky. I suppose when the only major project in the term of government of those opposite was a nicer building for its ministers, it is hard to work out where infrastructure funding actually comes from. Big infrastructure funding comes from Queensland Labor. We build and they cut.

Bizarrely, in response to the CFER the opposition blamed us for the low population growth forecast for the next year. In a media release the Leader of the Opposition said—

Queensland's population growth rate is forecast to be just 0.75% this financial year, which is barely more than half of what it was forecast to be at the end of last year ...

The Leader of the Opposition might not have noticed that the Prime Minister has put substantial restrictions on our international borders. She was probably too busy calling for the state borders to open to notice. I am sure that if the Leader of the Opposition were in charge she would be happily ferrying southerners across the border to pump up our interstate migration figures. We have seen a reduction in key revenues of over \$6.7 billion from payroll tax, royalties for coal and gas and GST payments over two years. What do those opposite do? They criticise us for falling population growth. At the very least, they need a lesson in the birds and the bees and where population growth actually comes from in a western democracy.

We entered this crisis in a strong fiscal position. We were on track to deliver our fifth consecutive surplus. Compare that to the LNP in Queensland and federally. The Newman government of course broke its own budget surplus promises. We still are waiting for the 2013 budget surplus from those opposite. Tony Abbott promised a budget surplus in the first year of office. Seven years later, we are still waiting for a federal budget surplus. They printed the 'back in black' mugs and T-shirts. A forecast surplus is not a surplus.

We are getting on with the job. We have an additional \$500 million for the renewable energy fund. We are also providing an additional \$500 million to establish the Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund to power commercial enterprise in Queensland. We grow the economy; those opposite cut it. The LNP has to tell Queenslanders who, what, where and how much it intends to cut to fund the \$23 billion in unfunded election commitments.

Queensland's GSP is forecast to grow by 3¾ per cent in the calendar year 2020-21 compared to an RBA forecast of Australia's GDP to grow by two per cent. This follows a forecast 2½ per cent fall in Queensland's GSP in calendar year 2020 compared to an RBA forecast of a four per cent fall in Australia's GDP. We are outperforming other states. I commend the bills to the House. Strong borders equals a stronger local economy.

Debate, on motion of Mr Mellish, adjourned.