




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (6.18 pm): This is a budget where years of financial mismanagement, waste and excess have finally come home to roost. Because of Labor's economic mismanagement, this Labor state government has not been able to do more to support Queensland families and Queensland businesses. Long before COVID came along, Labor's reckless spending had resulted in a debt of more than \$90 billion. The Queensland economy was stagnating, with high unemployment, declining state revenues and business confidence through the floor—all before COVID. I suppose it comes as no surprise in light of this that, rather than front up and tell Queenslanders the truth, Labor chose to mislead by promising \$2 billion in additional borrowings before the election but delivering a budget that will see debt increased by seven times that amount, or \$28 billion.

It has to be said that a 700 per cent increase in just four weeks is a pretty solid effort. Let us be clear that this is not a massive investment in new infrastructure. Most of the government's infrastructure spend will not even start this financial year. Labor have said that revenue is collapsing and they need to borrow to pay for deficits and to protect jobs, but that simply does not wash. Queensland's unemployment rate is the worst in mainland Australia and despite racking up the biggest debt in Queensland history, unemployment is still forecast to be the worst in the nation in four years time at 6.5 per cent.

We have heard a defence mounted by the Treasurer and others that Queensland's debt is not going to be as high as the debt in New South Wales or Victoria, but that simply does not stack up either. Queensland's economy is considerably smaller than that of both New South Wales and Victoria and both are investing considerably more in infrastructure spending than this budget delivers for Queensland. In fact, in New South Wales that infrastructure spend is nearly twice as much as what is budgeted for in Queensland over the forward estimates.

It has been suggested that Labor did not mislead Queenslanders when they said they would increase debt by \$4 billion because they need to underwrite operating deficits and that was in addition to the \$4 billion figure. If we take this at face value, which I think is tenuous at best, it is instructive to observe that revenue is forecast to fall by \$12.3 billion over the next four years. So we arrive at a figure of approximately \$16.3 billion if we accept all of Labor's arguments and assumptions and yet debt is going to increase by another \$11.7 billion on top of this.

Government members interjected.

Mr MICKELBERG: They do not like to hear it. The answer is simple. Labor knew what the budget situation was prior to the election in October and they knew the inconvenient truth that the debt was going to hit \$130 billion.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Order! Members to my right, please cease all cross-chamber interjections.

Mr MICKELBERG: They deliberately deceived the Queensland public and they hid the true state of affairs for their own political benefit. It is a broken promise plain and simple and the Queensland people will see it for that.

Small business is the engine room of the Queensland economy and they are the backbone of our communities right across Queensland. The Treasurer stated in his budget speech that Queensland small businesses 'bore the brunt of the COVID-19 downturn' and yet rather than providing any new support to small and medium businesses across the state, the Treasurer has decided to ignore them. As the CCIQ said, this is a state budget that 'fails to deliver the immediate measures needed to protect business ahead of the looming economic cliff'. Much of the information contained in the Queensland government's Budget Highlights under the heading 'Backing business' reads like a history book. Struggling small businesses do not want to read about funding that has previously been expended. They need real support now and they need real investment now.

Despite the clear calls from CCIQ and businesses across the state, the Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business have both been silent on their requests for a waiver of the payroll tax deferred under their COVID-19 provisions. The situation whereby accrued payroll tax liabilities will come due at the same time as payroll tax recommences and the JobKeeper stimulus is due to wind down, is hardly a recipe for business confidence or creating more jobs.

Perhaps more concerning is the fact that the Treasurer has not made any effort to make structural reform to the Queensland economy or to tackle the big issues that are holding back business from employing more Queenslanders. At 15.5 per cent, Queensland has the worst youth unemployment rate in the nation. We have heard a senior Labor minister say that the youth unemployment crisis is a problem that cannot be solved. It is a disgrace and it is not good enough. Some 70,000 young Queenslanders between the ages of 15 and 24 are in the unemployment queue today. Labor is wasting the potential of Queensland's young people.

We have heard much about the \$1 billion that this government is supposedly going to spend on training. Unfortunately, this government's record on training is less than stellar. When it comes to training and vocational education, Labor are all talk and no action. Labor's glossy brochures cannot hide the fact that apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and completions have fallen off a cliff on its watch. Course completions between December 2014 and March 2020 have declined by nearly one-third—32.7 per cent. Labor's training failure is one reason Queensland has suffered the highest unemployment rate in the country under the Palaszczuk government.

I acknowledge that there is investment with an expansion of the existing free apprenticeships for under-21s program. It is encouraging that the government has announced that it is now extending this program to Queenslanders under 25. While this is a positive step forward, it falls short of the training opportunities that Queenslanders need to improve their employment opportunities and given Labor's record on training it is reasonable to be sceptical about their ability to deliver.

I will shift now to how this budget fails my electorate. During the recent election I was pleased to see Labor's election commitment to build new halls at both Buderim Mountain State School and Chancellor State College's secondary campus, particularly when Labor could not bring themselves to make a single local election commitment in Buderim in the 2017 election—not a single dollar. As a consequence, one of the most disappointing aspects of this budget is that not more than a month after their much hyped announcement Labor could not even bring themselves to fund their own election commitment to build new school halls for schools in my electorate. This omission is even more galling when considered in light of the \$3.2 million in funding for extensions to an existing multipurpose hall at Caloundra State School. It begs the question as to why a school that has an existing hall servicing 560 students has received funding ahead of two schools in my electorate that do not have any school hall and have a combined student population of 3,500 students.

Given the Buderim Mountain State School hall has been shovel ready for many months, the only conclusion that I can arrive at is the fact that these funding decisions have been made through the lens of Labor's political interests. It is a little too coincidental that an extension to an existing hall in one of Labor's target seats has been funded while far more compelling projects at schools that have no hall have been ignored. I call on the Labor government to make funding decisions on the basis of student need and not to further their own political objectives.

While speaking about my local state high schools, I would also like to draw attention to an omission of any funding to provide school based police officers for Chancellor State College and Mountain Creek State High School. These are important commitments and something I have

campaigned for since being elected in 2017. I believe school based police officers are an important tool to proactively and positively engage with at-risk youth. My local teachers, students, parents, principals and local police have all told me of their support for a full-time school based police officer to service the more than 5,700 students who attend Chancellor State College and Mountain Creek State High School. It is time for Labor to listen to our community's voice and deliver a school based police officer.

This budget reserves perhaps its biggest slap in the face for parents and students attending Chancellor State College's primary campus. For years I have called on the Labor state government and the Sunshine Coast Council to work together to fix the longstanding issue of Scholars Drive. Scholars Drive is a disaster waiting to happen. What should be a 10-minute round trip to pick up and drop off students at Chancellor State College's primary campus is often a 45-minute excursion, and a dangerous one at that. It is an issue that was raised in parliament as far back as 2006. That is why I have worked collaboratively with Councillor Christian Dickson to navigate a path to solving this issue.

To that end, on 1 June this year I submitted a detailed School Transport Infrastructure Program funding application which sought funding from the state government of a shade under \$485,000 to deliver, in partnership with the Sunshine Coast Council, an alternative exit to Scholars Drive which would be known as the Jade Link. It was also to fund improvements to facilitate pedestrian access around Chancellor State College's primary campus. I table that application for the information of my community and for the attention of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads.

Tabled paper: Queensland Transport, School Transport Infrastructure Program (STIP) Ideas Application form made by the member for Buderim, Mr Brent Mickelberg MP [371](#)

After more than five months I am still waiting for a response to this application.

In fact, rather than listen to the community and deliver the improvements that the Sippy Downs community has been asking for, this Labor government has instead decided to spend \$90,000 building bike racks at the Chancellor State College's primary campus under the exact same School Transport Infrastructure Program. Do not get me wrong: bike racks are nice, but I am pretty confident that if we surveyed parents, students and teachers at Chancellor State College's primary campus the overwhelming request would be to fix Scholars Drive rather than spend \$90,000 on bike racks. I implore the minister to listen to the voice of the Sippy Downs community and fix Scholars Drive. Unlike some of his colleagues, Minister Bailey has shown in the past that he is prepared to listen. So this is the perfect opportunity to show the people of Sippy Downs, and indeed the rest of Queensland, that politics can be put aside when the safety of our community is at stake.

On that note, I would like to acknowledge that funding in the budget for upgrades in the area known as the Buderim-Mooloolah interchange, or what locals might identify as the intersections and roundabouts between Mooloolaba Road, Wises Road and Sugar Road. The amount of \$10 million is committed in the budget to upgrade this stretch of road over the next three years. There is also additional funding in the budget to improve—

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.



Mr MICKELBERG: In the brief time I have left, I would like to address two key projects that constrain the Sunshine Coast's future. The first is Labor's failure to get on with the job of fixing the Mooloolah River interchange on the Sunshine Motorway. This is a critical upgrade that will save lives and remove a bottleneck which chokes traffic every single day. Residents and tourists alike are met daily with long lines of traffic backing up for kilometres due to the poor design of the interchange. Worst still, all too frequently our local emergency services personnel have to respond to serious motor vehicle accidents—sometimes fatal.

In 2017, Building Queensland described the area as 'congested and lacking capacity to accommodate forecast travel demand'. The business case has been delayed countless times. After being told it would be finished by the end of this year, it looks from the budget papers that we will still be waiting after the next budget is handed down. The time for analysis has long past. Labor need to finalise the business case now and get on with building the Mooloolah River interchange. I could speak for much longer on that project, but the final project I will address is the duplication of the Sunshine Coast rail line.

What can I say other than it looks like Labor's 'go slow' continues. After promising to start construction on these critical rail upgrades in 2009 when the Premier was sitting around the cabinet table, the Sunshine Coast is still waiting for works to commence. The new member for Nicklin came in here last night trying to talk a big game about delivering for his electorate and he did not mention rail duplication once. He did not mention it in his maiden speech either. Given his electorate stands to benefit more than any other electorate in the state, you would think he would want to talk about it at least once. I am sure that, being the fearless advocate that he is, he will be pushing the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to stop talking and to start building. I look forward to seeing it.

I should forgive him given that he only moved into the Nicklin electorate in September. The people of Nicklin deserve better. Queenslanders deserve better than what is in this budget. This budget failed small business. It failed the Sunshine Coast. It failed the more than 214,000 Queenslanders sitting in unemployment queues. Worst of all, with their \$28 billion deception, this budget confirms that Labor will always put their interests ahead of the people of Queensland.