




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (10.06 pm): I rise to speak on the appropriation bills and to highlight the important choices and decisions that have informed the 2020-21 state budget. 2020 is a year that has certainly challenged Queensland. It has challenged our health, challenged our economy and also challenged the way we do things in this state. It was in January 2020 that our government declared COVID-19 a health emergency and, as we reach the end of this tumultuous year, while we can pause to take a short breath we must remain ever vigilant to the deadly virus. Early action and the resolute decision that the health of Queenslanders was most important guided our government's strong health response and, in turn, our economic recovery. Our state's success, the people of Queensland's success, in containing the spread of the virus means that it is expected that the June quarter will be the lowest point of the COVID-19 economic cycle.

Since March we have remained focused and consistent in our approach through the implementation of a clear economic recovery plan based on nine key and long-term objectives. Those objectives are easy to understand. They cover the incredibly diverse needs of our economy and our communities, and importantly they highlight and support initiatives that we know are working. The recent ABS labour force data release showed that between May and October employment rebounded by 205,900 persons, above the pre-pandemic level in March 2020. Those are promising figures but, as the Treasurer has made very clear, Queensland's recovery from COVID-19 is a long-term challenge that requires a long-term response.

The objectives of our Unite and Recover Economic Recovery Plan are also what guided the significant package of election commitments that we took to the people of Queensland. Importantly, we did not shy away from the truth. We did not spin it. We did not hide it. We were very clear with the people of Queensland that we would borrow to meet our election commitments. The people of Queensland understood that borrowing was prudent and that borrowings will increase. And guess what? The sky did not fall down.

Whether you are the Morrison government, the Berejiklian government, the Andrews government or the Palaszczuk government, governments are borrowing to rebuild. As the Treasurer said in his budget speech, if there has ever been a time to borrow to build to create jobs and to strengthen the Queensland economy, it is now. Unlike New South Wales and Victoria, our debt will be lower. Key debt metrics as at 2023-24 shows net debt for Victoria at \$87 billion, New South Wales at \$93 billion and Queensland at \$68 billion.

Being honest with the people of Queensland was again a choice and those opposite did not choose wisely. They chose to actively mislead the community, to promise big on self-described bold projects and on surpluses. They chose to wait to the very end of the election campaign when a large proportion of Queenslanders had voted to reveal that their whole campaign was, indeed, nothing but an embarrassing backdown of their two signature commitments on the Bruce Highway and the Bradfield scheme.

The 2020-21 state budget delivered by the Palaszczuk government focuses on the issues that we know matter to the people of Queensland: the creation of jobs, the opportunity of education, accessible health care, safe and inclusive communities, reducing cost-of-living pressures and infrastructure for our growing state. Despite what the Leader of the Opposition says, we are backing jobs in this budget. This is particularly important for the people in my own electorate of Jordan. Whilst we know that there are more Queenslanders working than there were before the pandemic struck, we also know that the number of Queenslanders who want to work has also increased. The outlook for employment is strong. In year-average terms it is forecast to rise one per cent in 2020-21 and in quarterly terms is forecast to rise by 6¾ per cent, around 106,000 persons, through the year to the June quarter 2021—all made possible through making the decisions to invest in job-generating infrastructure, increased frontline services and a focus on new industries and diversifying our economy.

We also know that particularly in outer metropolitan areas, like Greater Springfield and Greater Flagstone in my electorate, small and medium businesses are vital to the economic prosperity of our region. Our government's further commitment of \$140 million for our Big Plans for Small Business strategy will be welcomed in my electorate by hardworking local business owners, the very same local business owners who took advantage of our small business COVID-19 adaptation grants—100 local small businesses that received a share of over \$900,000 in the Jordan electorate alone—which I know supported them during the most challenging times. This also complements the \$2.3 billion which included payroll tax relief, electricity rebates and interest-free loans that have supported businesses to keep 334,000 Queenslanders in work during the pandemic.

I am honoured to represent the most fantastic schools in the Jordan electorate. This year's budget provides an education boost for our growing area, delivering a great start for our children and young people. Springfield Central State High School is the fastest growing high school in my electorate and we are complementing the \$10 million already announced for a new building, which is currently under construction, with a further \$1.32 million for additional classrooms. Springfield Central State School will also receive \$9.3 million for additional classrooms. I know how necessary this funding is for what is a very popular school.

I am pleased to see funding in the budget for the brand new primary school we are delivering in Greenbank, due to open in term 1 of 2022—the first school to be built in this area for 132 years. We have also not forgotten the fantastic Greenbank State School, which is also receiving additional capital works funding. One of my favourite election commitments, which came through our Local Schools Local Jobs policy, will see Woodcrest State College receive \$2.25 million to upgrade the very successful WesTEC Trade Training Centre as we prepare local students for jobs in aviation engineering, an important and growing industry in the western corridor.

My excitement does not end there. As Jordan is one of Queensland's high-growth electorates, our government has made a strong commitment to begin the planning for the new schools we will need to manage our growing population and ensure our local children have access to quality education and state-of-the-art facilities. For the Jordan electorate, planning will begin for six new schools, including two new high schools and a special school. I cannot express how important this commitment is, because it is about recognising and getting ahead of the growth—good planning leading to good education outcomes.

I am also proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of resourcing our health system properly. This year's budget has a record investment of \$21.8 billion in health services and infrastructure, which includes significant upgrades for the Logan and Ipswich hospitals. The \$265 million in the budget to commence delivery of seven new satellite hospitals, including one for the Ipswich region, is a forward-thinking commitment and I look forward to working closely with West Moreton HHS on the delivery of this innovative model of care. Our government has also committed additional funding of \$360.5 million this financial year to assist with the delivery of the government's COVID-19 response plan.

This year, the Jordan electorate was in the unenviable position of being impacted by not one but two COVID-19 outbreaks, so I understand firsthand how important this funding is to support health and emergency services, to move swiftly in testing, contact tracing and additional support to our communities. Of course, none of this is possible without the amazing health staff. Again our government made the choice to invest in frontline health staff. Over the next four years we will hire an extra 9,475 frontline health staff, including 5,800 nurses and midwives, 1,500 doctors, 475 paramedics and 1,700 allied health professionals. As has been demonstrated so clearly this year, our health system is strong because of the deliberate efforts of our government since 2015, and the Palaszczuk government will ensure it remains strong.

Through the budget we have announced that over the next four years the value of the Palaszczuk government's capital works and infrastructure program will be \$56 billion, a record spend. I am particularly pleased to see continued funding for important infrastructure projects in my electorate. The

\$44.5 million Springfield Central park-and-ride is now under construction and, weather permitting, we will see a brand new multistorey car park delivering 1,100 spots across the station precinct by early 2022, a project also creating 44 jobs.

It is also terrific to see our government's increased focus on the Centenary Motorway. Funding is secured in the budget for an upgrade to my favourite interchange, the Centenary Logan Motorway Interchange, with detailed engineering design to begin early next year, and funding for the Centenary Bridge duplication at Jindalee. Further funding for the Mount Lindesay Highway has also been secured through the budget, which is really great news for our communities in Greenbank and Flagstone and I know will also make my colleague the member for Logan very happy.

I strongly believe that rail is the future for outer metropolitan areas. It is pleasing to see that this budget has included planning funding for both the Ipswich-Springfield rail line and the Salisbury-Beaudesert rail line. This is very welcome news.

Cross River Rail continues to be a signature project and is absolutely necessary if we are to see the realisation of expanded rail services outside of Brisbane. This project charging ahead has been really good to see. This is despite the federal government again making a clear choice to ignore this catalytic project with zero funding support, thereby showing those of us who live in Greater Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast that they do not care about commuters in our areas.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the Queensland Treasurer on the delivery of the 2020-21 budget. It is indeed a mammoth task to deliver a budget in a month, and the member for Woodridge and his staff should be acknowledged for this. In turn, I also acknowledge the Under Treasurer, Rachel Hunter, and the many Treasury officers who work so diligently and professionally to meet the government's requirements of delivering a state budget in December.

On our side of the House, we understand that we have an obligation and a duty to ensure that we now meet every one of the over 1,000 commitments that formed part of our re-election campaign. Every minister and every member of the Palaszczuk government will and must be focused on driving the delivery of these commitments. We cannot waste the opportunity that we have been given, and our 2020-21 budget is the beginning of this opportunity. The people of Queensland also made an important choice: they chose to support the Palaszczuk government for a third term. We cannot and we will not let them down. I commend the bills to the House.