



Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**


**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL**

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 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.50 pm): I rise to address the debate on the Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill 2020 and the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020. The Palaszczuk state Labor government's budget for 2020-21 is one that is built entirely on a broken promise by Labor and also a failed commitment that was given by Labor to the people of Queensland at the most recent state election. At the 31 October 2020 state election Labor sought and were granted a mandate to borrow \$4 billion. However, in the Queensland Labor state budget that was handed down this week that figure has now blown out to \$28 billion, an amount that is seven times what the people of Queensland were told would be borrowed by the Labor state government.

Average unemployment for Queensland in 2020-21 under the Palaszczuk state Labor government is forecast to be 7.5 per cent and by the end of the forward estimates Queensland will still have the highest unemployment rate in the nation. The Labor state government's own figures have operating deficits over the next four years equating to \$16.8 billion, including \$8.6 billion in 2020-21. The critical question that must be asked is the following: is the Palaszczuk state Labor government really borrowing to primarily invest in infrastructure to improve Queensland's net worth? The answer is no. Despite borrowing \$28 billion, Queensland's net worth will only increase by \$150 million.

The economic mismanagement by this Labor government is absolutely heartbreaking. Labor is mortgaging the wealth of future generations of Queenslanders. In contrast to New South Wales—I note that the Palaszczuk state Labor Treasurer is fond of comparing Queensland to southern states—it is indeed a fact that New South Wales will be borrowing \$62 billion and at the same time be increasing its net worth as a state by \$30 billion in just four years. It is clear that the Palaszczuk state Labor government is predominantly borrowing to pay for recurrent expenses, including its ever-expanding Public Service wages bill. This is simply unsustainable for Queensland and our future generations.

As I have said in previous budget-in-reply contributions, the Palaszczuk state Labor government's ongoing economic strategy is strictly one that is an exercise in smoke and mirrors. We have seen this all before when the Palaszczuk state Labor government raided \$3.4 billion from the funds set aside for public servant long service leave entitlements, as well as Labor loading general government debt onto government owned corporations.

As the Liberal National Party shadow minister for education I now wish to turn to the \$14.2 billion that has been allocated in the 2020-21 budget for education funding in Queensland. A centrepiece of the Palaszczuk state Labor government's education budget has been its very problematic Cooler Cleaner Schools Program. For two years Labor repeatedly denied the benefits of air conditioning in state school classrooms and it was only thanks to the Liberal National Party's long campaign in collaboration with Queensland parents that we were able to force the Palaszczuk state Labor government to take some action. On this side of the House we will continue the campaign on behalf of Queensland families, students and teachers to ensure that Labor delivers air conditioning to every state school classroom on time and on budget.

The Palaszczuk state Labor government's installation of air-conditioning units is extremely problematic, with reported instances of air conditioning either not working or not being able to be turned on. Indeed, there are schools which currently do not have the network capacity to run air-conditioning units, with one school on Brisbane's north side reporting that ceiling fans were taken out to make way for air-conditioning units that cannot even be switched on. If Labor had acted sooner, instead of denying there was a problem, our students would have had appropriate air conditioning in their classrooms just as we are about to face further scorching temperatures across Queensland.

No-one denies that Queensland students deserve a world-class education system. Indeed, that is what Labor has promised Queensland families time and time again, yet under Labor we are also seeing student results in critical subjects such as English and maths in Queensland going backwards. Queenslanders now know why Labor wanted to scrap NAPLAN in favour of other standardised testing models: because by the state Labor government's own budget papers we find that in 23 out of the 24 targets in 2019 the only target met was in year 3 Indigenous student reading. Quite frankly, the Palaszczuk state Labor government is failing our next generation of students.

I note that within the allocation of funding for Queensland education \$1.9 billion has been allocated for infrastructure spending, including \$258 million over four years to deliver 26 new multipurpose school halls and performing arts centres. It is imperative that there must be absolute transparency with both school communities and, more broadly, the people of Queensland on the criteria when determining where such school infrastructure will be built given that many schools are in desperate need of this investment. Even in my own electorate of Moggill, Kenmore State High School, which I have written to the Labor Minister for Education about previously and which for too long has been in desperate need of an upgrade to its dilapidated school hall, has long been forgotten by Labor.

In this state budget there is also an allocation of \$20 million over four years for the planning of new schools in Queensland, as well as additional funding for land acquisitions for future schools. In the absence of an independent schools planning commission, again it is entirely incumbent on the Palaszczuk state Labor government to be completely open and transparent with regard to the decisions that will be taken and the approval processes of all new schools and associated land acquisitions that are made. This is even more important during the 57th Parliament given the previous terms of the Palaszczuk state Labor government which saw two new high schools announced in inner-city Brisbane in the seats of McConnel and South Brisbane and the less than transparent reasoning behind the prioritisation of these particular schools.

Further, such transparency and accountability is required given the broad circumstances pertaining to new school selection and location to ancillary services, all matters which have been well canvassed by the Crime and Corruption Commission as well as in the Queensland parliament and in the public domain. This is even before we come to appointment of school principals, given the myriad matters, including contact by senior elected Labor members of the Queensland parliament with ministers and departmental officers involving matters which had to be independently examined with respect to questions of probity, alleged inappropriate corrupt conduct and those aspects of alleged impropriety which had to be formally examined and investigated by the Crime and Corruption Commission.

In the portfolio of education \$100 million will also be spent on a student wellbeing package, with \$4 million to be allocated towards a pilot project that will see general practitioners placed in 20 secondary state schools. With regard to this pilot project, the state Labor government will have to be mindful of how the health screening and clinical care that is provided by such general practitioners will be coordinated with other health service providers, whether they be treating clinicians or clinical service entities. It is also unclear from the budget papers what infrastructure will be included as part of this student health and wellbeing package, including what provision will be made for physical spaces, health equipment and clinical information management systems.

I have also noted the Palaszczuk state Labor government's \$8 million over four years for after-school homework centres and \$45 million over three years for enhanced training facilities in schools and I look forward to receiving further detail and seeing how this will be implemented over the forward estimates. Also the Labor state budget appears to have no clarity or certainty in relation to independent public schools. This will be of grave concern to many school principals, parents and teachers across Queensland. The minister's response in commentary to date, even today in the parliament, has been less than reassuring.

Turning now to the arts portfolio, as the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for the arts I have noted that the Palaszczuk state Labor government has allocated \$290 million in the 2020-21 state budget. Much of this funding had already been announced and allocated earlier this year, given the announcement in June of the Arts and Cultural Recovery Package, a package which many stakeholders believe did not go far enough to support this vital sector. Given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

on our arts and cultural sector, the delivery of a new performing arts venue and theatre at QPAC must be delivered on time and on budget. This will be critical to revitalising our vibrant and diverse arts and cultural sector here in Queensland given the impacts of COVID-19.

With respect to health and the allocated funding of \$21.8 billion in the state budget, \$1.6 billion is included with respect to infrastructure spending, with \$265 million for seven satellite hospitals in South-East Queensland. I note that one of these satellite hospitals will be located in Ipswich. There needs to be methodical and careful consideration as to how the clinical services framework and the provision of patient care within these satellite hospitals is coordinated with other secondary and tertiary hospitals and primary care providers. There is also funding for hospital redevelopment projects in Emerald, Thursday Island, Atherton, Blackall and Proserpine. With such hospital capital redevelopment projects, there also needs to be ancillary workforce planning in order to maximise clinical health service provision in these communities. To that end, given this year's specific allocation of funding of the hospital capital redevelopment program, the Palaszczuk state Labor government must look to also further expand Queensland's rural generalist pathway.

Over the past 15 years, this significant medical workforce program has undergone a gradual development and evolution, and there has been a further enhancement at the national level of the principles of the program under the leadership of National Rural Health Commissioners including Professor Paul Worley and Professor Ruth Stewart, as well as various Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine presidents including Dr Ewen McPhee, Dr Sarah Chalmers, Professor Dennis Pashen, ACRRM CEO Marita Cowie, RDAA presidents including Dr John Hall and Dr Adam Coltzau, Vicki Sheedy and many others.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge Dr Denis Lennox, the founder of the Rural Generalist Pathway in Queensland, as well as the contributions to rural generalist training of Dr Dan Manahan, Dr Tarun Sen Gupta, Dr Neil Beaton, Dr Cameron Bardsley, Dr Katie Mills, Natalie Taylor, Deanne Bond, Graeme Wainwright, Cathy Kirkbride, Dr Dan Halliday and many others. I acknowledge their direct contribution to rural generalist training over many years. I add that Dr Victoria Brazil has made a tremendous contribution in her former role in Queensland Health as Director of Medical Education and Training, QMET, and now in her academic appointment as Director of Clinical Simulation at Bond University and as a senior staff specialist in emergency medicine at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

I now wish to highlight some issues on behalf of local residents in the electorate of Moggill as they relate to the Palaszczuk state Labor government's 2020-21 budget. From the Palaszczuk Labor government's own budget papers it is abundantly clear that traffic congestion issues across the western suburbs of Brisbane are set to continue. After years of my continued advocacy, during my last parliamentary term combined federal and state government funding was secured for upgrading the Kenmore roundabout. However, the Palaszczuk state Labor government is further delaying that vital upgrade. Labor is also continuing with its go-slow approach to the duplication of the Centenary Highway bridge.

I have consistently advocated for funding solutions to urgently address cyclist safety in the electorate of Moggill. After years of delay and inaction with the Palaszczuk Labor government's Moggill Road cyclist access improvement study first announced in 2016, \$600,000 has been allocated in this budget over the next two years for Moggill Road cycle planning from the Rafting Ground Reserve to Centenary Highway. However, again Labor's budget is light on detail. Labor must be transparent and open with local residents as to how this will align with the study and planning work already completed by the Palaszczuk state Labor government.

Once again the vital school infrastructure needs of many state schools in the electorate of Moggill have been overlooked. Labor cannot have any excuses for not investing in local schools in the electorate of Moggill. With \$258 million set aside for new multipurpose school halls and performing arts centres in schools across Queensland, the Palaszczuk state Labor government must specifically allocate funding to Kenmore State High School to fully upgrade its school hall. That project has been continually ignored, year after year, by the Palaszczuk state Labor government. With regard to state funding set aside for planning new schools and additional land acquisitions for future schools in Queensland, it is also incumbent on the re-elected Palaszczuk state Labor government to immediately prioritise a new high school to service families in the suburbs of Bellbowrie, Moggill, Anstead, Mount Crosby, Karana Downs and surrounding areas.

On another matter, prior to this week's state Labor budget I wrote to the newly appointed Labor minister for communities and stressed the need for dedicated community facilities to service local community groups in the western suburbs of Brisbane. With funding of \$18.9 million set aside in 2020-21 for neighbourhood and community centres, Labor should allocate dedicated funding for a new or improved community facility in the electorate of Moggill.

In conclusion, after five years of inaction local residents should not have to endure four more years of delays by the Palaszczuk state Labor government to address traffic congestion, provide better public transport, enhance our local school infrastructure, provide more support for local jobs and small businesses, and reduce cost-of-living pressures. Labor's economic management and continued failed approach to our state's finances will be devastating for Queensland's future generations. All Queenslanders and constituents of the electorate of Moggill deserve better than what Labor has announced in the 2020-21 state budget.