



Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**


**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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

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 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (4.54 pm): I rise to speak in support of the 2020 budget we have before us. I start by addressing a couple of issues that the Leader of the Opposition raised in his speech earlier today. He spoke about the public sector and said what he would offer their ‘customers’ if he were premier. These are customers that they are talking about—the people of Queensland—not voters, not residents, not citizens, not mums or dads, but customers. The government’s relationship with Queensland is not transactional, which is the way the LNP see it. They see it as transactional—that these people come together, obtain something and then just go. That is not the way the people of Queensland see their government. The relationship is ongoing, mutually beneficial, constantly changing, renegotiated. Queenslanders have an ongoing stake and interest in what their government does. They do not see themselves as the government’s customers.

Secondly, in regards to borrowing, one of the only lines the Leader of the Opposition had was that this budget has increased our net worth and that the borrowing has delivered ‘so little in return’. Queensland is not a corporation; we are a society. I question it when they say ‘so little in return’. They need to talk to the businesses in North Lakes that got one of our small business grants during the COVID-19 lockdown—such as the Fernwood gym, the 24/7 Breathe gym and Latitude Coffee roasters. Those grants kept the lights on, they kept the doors open and they kept Queenslanders in jobs, and that is a big return for ordinary working Queenslanders.

The remarks from the opposition leader today reveal a lot about what they think about Queenslanders and how they actually regard them—that is, they are a customer and a recipient of an investment to make a return. Only Labor treats Queenslanders like Queenslanders. We see them as members of a society, not as members of a corporation. Only Labor looks after Queenslanders and knows how to keep them safe. Only Labor delivers kids the education they need, delivers protections to workers as they go to work every day and delivers to those Queenslanders later in life the care that they need. And we do that without expecting a return.

I will talk a bit about what we will deliver to the people in Bancroft in this budget. In terms of state roads, I am very excited about the start of the process to deliver the Moreton Connector road. That will upgrade the Gateway Motorway between Bracken Ridge and Pine Rivers and help improve the Bruce Highway between Pine Rivers and Dohles Rocks Road and between Caboolture and Steve Irwin Way. These were all part of a \$56 billion capital works program, and that is \$14.8 billion being delivered this financial year to support 46,000 jobs in Queensland.

In terms of local health, I am very pleased to see we are continuing to fund the new MRI machine which is going into the Redcliffe Hospital. That is very much wanted and needed. We will also deliver funds for the construction of a new operating theatre at Redcliffe Hospital and we will start the business case to refurbish, reconstruct and rejuvenate the Redcliffe Hospital. There is an extra \$360 million to

keep support services going in Queensland Health—those support services that have kept us safe. I want to commend the government for that \$1.2 billion plan we delivered during COVID. Our COVID response plan has kept Queenslanders safe.

In terms of local infrastructure in this budget, I am very pleased to see that we are funding a range of council projects in Deception Bay, Burpengary East and North Lakes under Works for Queensland and the community stimulus package. For example, we are funding park and playground upgrades in seven parks—like Skye Blue Park in Leonie Street, Felicity Court and Endeavour Boulevard South Park. We are delivering funds to fund the first stage of construction of a new community facility at the old DPI fisheries site in Deception Bay. We have been chasing that for years.

Funds have been provided for an electrical and mechanical upgrade at the Deception Bay pool, and they are generally hard to fund. They are the funds that go into the things that people do not see: what is done underground and in the sheds. That is hugely important. We are investing and reinvesting in those facilities in our outer urban areas. We are also funding council to install a new toilet block at Uhlmann Road boat ramp. It is a very expensive one but we are pleased to do it. I want to commend our local councillor Mark Booth for pushing for that. It would not have happened otherwise.

I also want to talk briefly about the fact that this budget shows how well the Palaszczuk government is doing in terms of economic performance. I do believe—and it is very clear in this budget—that we are on the right track. The total number of employed people in Queensland is back to pre-COVID-19 levels. We have more people participating in the workforce and looking for work than any other east coast state. The September quarter retail sales in Queensland were 11 per cent higher than they were last year. Dwelling approvals are now higher than the pre-COVID-19 level. New loan commitments for owner-occupiers are the highest in 18 years in Queensland. I think this shows the confidence that Queenslanders have in their state and in the economic management of the Palaszczuk government. We will keep on creating more jobs in this term of office. Our economic recovery plan is supporting 55,000 jobs and our election commitments will support another 50,000 jobs.

I think this contrasts rather well with the woeful alternatives offered by the LNP. Their position on debt is unsustainable and hypocritical. They have been talking about how well New South Wales has done. Why do they not just get it over with and put on the blue jersey and parade up and down all day? I point out, as the Treasurer said, the net debt in New South Wales is \$93 billion; in Queensland it is \$68 billion. The net debt to revenue ratio in New South Wales is 112 per cent; in Queensland it is 77 per cent. The total debt including government corporations in New South Wales is \$191 billion; and in Queensland, \$130 billion. However, who are the big performers when it comes to debt? That is the federal coalition government; they are the monsters in the room. It will get to \$1.1 trillion. That is over \$1 million million. We have heard the LNP say this week, 'That's JobKeeper and JobSeeker.' However, in that case, that is borrowing—in their own terminology—to keep the lights on, the very thing that they have been accusing us of doing. The federal debt is going to do exactly that.

They have also said, 'They're borrowing a lot of money in Queensland. That is a lot more than we thought.' However, as the former federal finance minister Mathias Cormann said, what choice do we have? The LNP position is that it is okay for the federal government to build up this massive debt but not for Queensland Labor. Once again, it is hypocritical and their position is unsustainable.

I am very pleased with this budget. It delivers enormously for all the people of Queensland and the people of Bancroft. I commend it to the House.