



Speech By  
**Colin Boyce**


**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

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

**APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL**

 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (11.51 pm): I rise to speak to the appropriation bills of 2020. Once again, the Callide electorate has missed out on any major infrastructure builds throughout the entire area. There are a number of upgrades in the education and health portfolio areas. Chinchilla State School has been allocated \$2.8 million over three years for an engineering annexe to support training in the mining, gas and electrical industries. Taroom State School, in my home town, has been allocated \$1.5 million in the 2020-21 budget to replace an existing amenities block. The new addition will be most welcome, I am quite sure; however, I question how it could possibly cost \$1.5 million to replace a toilet block in a small country school. This is a question that I will be following up.

There is a \$6.2 million spend in the 2020-21 budget for the Calliope State High School stage 2 development. This is part of a total \$85 million delivery of a much needed and welcomed high school at Calliope. I acknowledge the efforts of the member for Gladstone, Mr Glenn Butcher, to make this happen, but again I question the money spend. To put it in simple terms, the private sector can build a three-bedroom house for \$200,000, so the high school build equates to approximately 400 new homes. I have been to the school and it is a most modern and wonderful school, but when I look about it I wonder where all the money has gone. Bureaucrats having meetings, perhaps? That is food for thought, I think. Eidsvold State School has been allocated \$600,000 to refurbish amenities and Gin Gin State School receives \$2.5 million for a new administration building.

In the health sector, there is \$122,000 for the Eidsvold Multipurpose Health Service and \$58,000 for redesign and refurbishment of the Gayndah Hospital. There has been nothing in the budget for rural birthing facilities or to address this problem throughout the Callide electorate and throughout rural Queensland.

We have a \$969,000 spend in the 2020-21 budget out of a total \$3.5 million spend to replace the Biloela police facility. There is approximately \$95 million and \$13 million respectively for overhauls and upgrades to the Callide and Kogan Creek power stations. I welcome the recognition by the government that they cannot do without coal-fired power. It is essential to the economy of Queensland that these facilities be kept operational well into the 2050s.

It is plainly obvious that the renewable energy sector projects such as Coopers Gap Wind Farm in my electorate, Australia's largest wind farm, are not capable of being reliable. The AGL wind farm is rapidly turning into another dodgy engineering and investment disaster. Of the 123 towers, 51 of the generators have to be replaced. There are problems with the yaw systems and bolt and blade breakage. Tower No. 10 has been condemned. Talk about renewable energy! It is not even 12 months old and they have to renew it. I suppose when you think about it, jobs will be created dismantling it and rebuilding it.

There is one item that appears in the budget papers that is of concern to me: page 93 of the Capital Statement, Budget Paper No. 3, Awoonga Dam emergency muster shelter 2020-21 budget—\$1.462 million. That is something that deserves an explanation. It might be a mistake; however, it means there will be another letter to the Minister for Water asking for an explanation.

While on the subject of water, one of the biggest single items of expenditure in the Callide electorate is the \$90 million spend on the destruction of Paradise Dam. As I have said many times, this is a disgrace and the most reckless and irresponsible decision I have seen the Labor government make. There is no provision for any water infrastructure builds in the Burnett-Boyne river system to supplement the loss of storage capacity in Paradise Dam.

There are several proposals that need investigating and building to give water security to agriculture up and down the Burnett and Boyne Valley. Fruit and berry growers and irrigators at Mundubbera have been waiting years to have the Cooranga Weir built on the Boyne River to give further water security to the \$100 million local berry industry, as have farmers at Coalstoun Lakes. However, with an anti-farmer agenda promoted by this government, it is unlikely that anything will ever be built. This is disgraceful.

Agriculture is one of our state's most important industries, and it is receiving no support from this government. In fact, what we see is a \$44 million budget cut at a time when agriculture faces the challenges of the COVID-19 era, the ongoing drought and matters like the implementation of Labor's reef legislation. Agriculture will need more extension officers, agronomists, soil scientists' advice and chemical and biosecurity advice. The list goes on and on. How does the government think it will implement reef legislation when the vast majority of agriculture people have little or no knowledge of what is required? Are we just going to put these people in jail for noncompliance? I note in volume 2 of the Service Delivery Statements that environmental policy is 'to control the activities of business and individuals'. That is Orwellian politics at its best. It is all based on flawed and manipulated science. In my view, science is being restructured from an institution of free thought and the generation of ideas into a servant of the ideological dogma of a ruling political regime. It goes further—

... to implement a targeted compliance program aimed at ensuring graziers, cane and banana growers meet their regulatory obligations for minimum practice standards in the regulated reef catchments.

What exactly are these minimum practice standards? Who is writing them up? What is the documentation that is required? Where are the models and the templates that people can use so they can determine if they are compliant or not? Will we see the return of these nasty, spiteful, overzealous burnt-out coppers who became known as the tree police, implemented by the Beattie government in the early 2000s? Will they now be the reef police with their body worn cameras and more powers of entry than ordinary police? I want to know how the government expects agriculture to comply with a slashed budget.

I also note that there is a full page in the Service Delivery Statements devoted to environmental policy programs and regulation services to identify, monitor and take action in relation to unlawful activity. There are detailed explanations and costings on effectiveness and efficiency, on how to prosecute people for noncompliance. Wouldn't it be nice if the government allocated some money to help people navigate reef legislation rather than assume they will be prosecuting them?

As far as the overall budget is concerned, I do not have a problem with the government borrowing money to build infrastructure to create wealth. What I do have a problem with is that since I have become a parliamentarian the total debt will have risen from \$80 billion in 2017 to a projected \$130 billion in 2024. The problem with that is that the government is borrowing money to fund its operational costs far more so than building things to generate wealth. In other words, in 2024, despite borrowing \$28 billion in 2020, the state of Queensland will be worse off than it is now. Unemployment is forecast to remain at 6.5 per cent and the government will have delivered substantially more debt for little or no tangible net worth. We will have seen little or no showpiece money-generating infrastructure builds.

Those opposite will argue things like, 'We built Cross River Rail'. Whilst that is arguably a necessary piece of infrastructure, the reality is that it is a public transport system that is heavily subsidised. It will have ongoing operational and maintenance costs. In other words, it is a net money cost rather than a net money maker for ever and a day.

The COVID-19 economic flow-on effects have not been yet realised. This time next year will be, I think, economically interesting. COVID-19 has not gone away. JobKeeper and JobSeeker will go away because we simply cannot keep paying people to do nothing. I doubt international air travel will return to what we know as normal for possibly years. This will have an economic effect, particularly on the tourism industry.

I would like to make mention of the John Peterson Bridge at Munduberra—a project that the federal government has committed \$20 million to of a total \$25 million build. The Labor government cannot even stump up \$5 million in the 2020-21 budget to get this job done and has rather pushed it out to the 2023-24 budget. This is more evidence of a Labor government that has no commitment to road infrastructure in rural areas, and particularly the Callide electorate.

In closing, the mining and resource sector along with the agricultural sector is what has kept Queensland economically sustainable in this COVID-19 era. There has been little or no support for either sector in the budget. We are caught in an economic rip-tide, dragged out on a sea of debt, treading water until possibly we slowly economically drown in a sea of debt.