




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (2.15 pm): It is interesting that during the election those opposite had nothing and once again the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer have nothing—absolutely nothing—to add in terms of any figures that they are going to borrow, how they are going to meet revenue decline or how they are going to arrest the unemployment rate. In the last two speeches we have heard nothing more than a pile of statements cobbled together that to me look like a shopping list where one would write down what one would like to see—a great environment, more people employed, no unemployment, world peace—without any strategy or pathway to get there.

It is extraordinary that the members of the opposition, who had nothing during the campaign—that is why the people of Queensland overwhelmingly rejected them and why they are in opposition for four more years—stand in this House today and give nothing but misleading statements, half-truths and half-baked ideas without any substance. In fact, when I closed my eyes I almost felt like I was listening to the Greens during the election campaign with all their grandiose plans—but the LNP did preference them and got them elected in this House. When one thinks about all care and no responsibility, all care and no plan to deliver, one thinks of the Greens and now one thinks of the LNP as well. Those opposite have just proven that.

I have not heard anyone talk Queensland down so much since Gus Gould commentated on the State of Origin or since the member for Nanango talked us down during the election—and we know where that got her. At the end of the day, it was nothing more than bagging Queensland. When everyone in the world is wanting to be just like us, those opposite talk Queensland down. What is their remedy? They are going to ring up Mr Morrison! Even Campbell Newman called him ‘Scotty from Marketing’ in the paper the other day because he has not delivered anything for Queensland in the money he has put in the budget.

What is the remedy of those opposite? They say, ‘Hey, Peter Dutton, it’s the Leader of the Opposition here, mate. I need some money. Can you help us here in Queensland?’ The answer is, ‘Yeah, sure, mate.’ In Queensland the relationship with the Brisbane City Council is good. Adrian Schinner is doing a great job. Those opposite are also going to rely on Adrian Schinner: ‘Adrian, mate, we need your help. We need to get Queensland moving.’ Those opposite have nothing. They have to talk to the Prime Minister and the Lord Mayor because they have nothing. The speeches today have clearly demonstrated that. Yesterday Mark Ludlow from the Australian *Financial Review* tweeted—

The LNP line on Qld budget—Labor said they would only borrow \$4b more—is laughable.

What we have heard today is laughable. He tweeted—

The ALP didn’t say that.

We did not say that; it was printed in the *Financial Review*, which is a respected paper in this country. He tweeted—

The \$4b was to fund election commitments.

That is exactly what we are doing and what this budget is delivering. He also tweeted—

If that's the best David Crisafulli has got it's going to be a long four years.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Minister, you will refer to members by their correct title.

Ms GRACE: I was quoting from the *Financial Review*.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I will take some advice. Minister, even in a quote you should refer to members by their correct title.

Ms GRACE: I am sorry. My mistake. I did not realise.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I appreciate the apology.

Ms GRACE: If that is the best that the Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater can do, I repeat, it will be a long four years. There was no recognition that revenue is dropping, which the budget papers have outlined. We are looking at \$12.4 billion of revenue drop and GST. We have reductions in forecast revenue because of what we have had to deal with in Queensland and that we have dealt with better than anywhere else, which is driving the Australian economy, I might add. Of course, I refer to the manner in which we have handled COVID-19 in this state.

Over Christmas, people from New South Wales and Victoria can come to Queensland and they are welcome because it is safe to do so. They are coming, but if it is as hard as it was for me to get accommodation—anywhere in this state—it is going to be pretty hard for them unless they already have somewhere to stay. Even by contacting hotels and booking sites that serve the tourism industry, you cannot find a place to stay. I ended up getting one of the last one-bedroom units available at Rainbow Beach. Towards the end of January I will be spending a few nights in that beautiful part of Queensland. It was a struggle to find that accommodation. In order to book that unit a number of phone calls were made to confirm whether or not someone was coming.

Those opposite say that we are not doing anything for small business, but look at all of the investment that we are making in this state in infrastructure, schools, small business and the arts industry. Ministers have been making speech after speech outlining what was done during COVID-19, yet all those opposite can say is, 'Isn't New South Wales great!' If it is so great, why don't you go and live there? That is all I can say to them all. Why are you a member of this parliament? If it is so great, then go to New South Wales and take your chances down there! That is what I say.

I am reminded of the folktale *The Emperor's New Clothes*. The emperor is walking around saying, 'Look at me, I have a vision for Queensland! We're going to do all of this stuff.' This feels a little like the emperor has no clothes. I have said it before and I will say it again: they had nothing during the election and they have nothing now. It is no wonder that the people of Queensland overwhelmingly rejected the LNP opposition and returned the Palaszczuk Labor government with an even greater majority.

What we say is what we do. The people know that what we do is balanced and that we do what we say. What the Premier and the Treasurer said during the campaign is exactly what we are delivering. To say that we somehow misled, did not tell the truth or broke our promise is laughable. It is also laughable that they have no alternative plan whatsoever other than 'if we get in we are gonna do this and we are gonna do that', but the 'gonna' attitude does not get you anywhere. It will be four long years for their backbench members. The only one who knew about the budget was the member for Burnett and they have put him back there. I would be worried if I were a member opposite.

As Minister for Education, I am very pleased to have a \$14.2 billion record education budget. There will be \$1.9 billion for infrastructure, including five new schools to open next year and three new schools to open in 2022. We are looking to build a new school in Brisbane's inner west in 2023. We will spend an additional \$1 billion over the next four years to deliver new classrooms, halls, performing arts complexes, refurbishments, renewal projects, shovel-ready projects for playground upgrades, improved security fencing and better amenities. Of course, we are linking with the VET sector in schools to improve facilities. I look forward to working with the Assistant Minister for Education, the member for Keppel, on that project. I will work with her as she steers that course through the next four years.

We are investing \$180 million in the non-government sector. The Catholic and independent schools are very much in favour of the additional money that they will be getting to build the infrastructure that they will need into the future. They are very pleased with what we have said.

We know that schools are not just bricks and mortar. Although that helps of course, they are really about the teachers, teacher aides and other staff. Through our health and wellbeing programs, professionals will work in schools to help young people with health and wellbeing issues. Psychologists, social workers and counsellors will be employed directly in schools. They will be there to assist and relieve teachers, who will be able to concentrate on the front line, that is, teaching in the classroom. That is a fantastic program.

Our funding will create homework hubs and provide for extra teacher aides and teachers. Those opposite complain that New South Wales is better than Queensland, but I have not seen anything at all like that in its budget. We are investing in the teacher workforce. We want to make sure that we have enough STEM teachers. I am very excited about the internship program. Three hundred interns will come on board. They will be paid under the industrial agreement, which provides for internships. They will be paid while they study. I look forward to the internship program providing 300 aspiring teachers with the opportunity to shape their careers for the future.

Mr Last: Send a few out my way.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection from the member for Burdekin, who is a very good member. I am happy to send some his way, as well as throughout Queensland. I am hoping that no-one will miss out.

Industrial relations is another area in which we will be investing. We will provide for additional inspectors to make sure that our labour hire licensing and wage theft laws are being adhered to. I am pleased to commit \$5 million in funding for medical research into the terrible affliction that is dust lung diseases, particularly silicosis. As Minister for Education I am very proud that we are leading Australia in that space. Indeed, that is recognised throughout the world. When international doctors come to Queensland, they cannot believe what we have done in that area. Our model is used worldwide.

I am very proud to have the racing portfolio back. Our continued success in the country racing package—

Mr Bleijie: Two hundred amendments to the racing bill.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection from the member for Kawana. He talks about the amendments to a bill that I did not introduce into this House and he knows that to be the case. I have never seen an industry happier to have me back, although of course the member for Sandgate did a fantastic job. That might be because perhaps my tips are a bit better than those of the member for Sandgate, but I am not sure. We have committed to the country racing package and the Gold Coast Turf Club. We will commit to infrastructure projects. Racing is very happy to see this happening. The member for Lockyer has told me that his local club is putting together a package for some infrastructure spend in Lockyer. I look forward to visiting that racetrack with him at a later stage.

In the electorate of McConnel schools are growing exponentially. We are spending money to make sure that we have the classrooms we need to accommodate growth in student numbers. There will be upgraded funding for Brisbane Central and New Farm state schools. Stage 2 of Fortitude Valley State Secondary College will be opened by 2023 with another \$40 million injection for the indoor sports complex and the senior school as part of the staged approach to delivering that education infrastructure.

Turning to our healthcare workers, we will employ more nurses and doctors in the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, which is one of the top tertiary hospitals in Queensland. The research capacity of the Herston precinct is unmatched. I am looking forward to the new hospital opening there soon.

I am also looking forward to the expansion of the Spring Hill Loop bus service. At the moment the service operates only on Monday to Friday, but it will be expanded so that Spring Hill residents can access that bus service on weekends. We will trial that over the next two years. It has been fully funded and we will deliver it.

We are also putting more police on the beat. Our safe night precincts are going to be looked after when it comes to alcohol fuelled violence. The piece de resistance, which I am very happy to be finally delivering, is the Ballymore redevelopment, a \$15 million injection. We have the women's team coming up. They will be housed at Ballymore. The upgraded, state-of-the-art facilities will be open to the public. The public will have access to the grounds and will be able to use the facilities. On this amazing project we are partnering with the federal government. We are each putting \$15 million into that project to deliver \$30 million-plus. The club will also be putting in money for this great Ballymore redevelopment. I know that a lot of residents are very happy with the design and with what we will deliver.

This is a budget that supports business. This is a budget about jobs, jobs, jobs. This is a budget that is delivering in a world health pandemic. This is a budget that will get the economy going. I predict that over the next four years Queensland will be the economic powerhouse of Australia, and that is because of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

(Time expired)