




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (5.09 pm): I rise to make a contribution in this cognate debate on the two appropriation bills. I will, as others have, confine my comments to the Appropriation Bill itself.

We all know that these bills provide authority to spend money in the coming financial year until the state budget is delivered after the election. These bills also provide the basis for the government's mini-budget as announced this week. I will most certainly support these bills today, but I will take a moment to reflect on what kind of budget we should be fighting for in Queensland.

There are some elements of the mini-budget which are welcome—for instance, the commitment to assisting households with utilities bills. In general, the Greens strongly support government borrowing in times of hardship to look after ordinary people. The vital point is that we must make sure that ordinary people do not end up paying for this recovery. We should be aiming to create thousands of good, secure jobs and fully fund public health and education, paid for by making big mining corporations, banks and developers pay their fair share in tax.

The economic recovery we are working through should not aim to simply go back to the status quo before COVID hit. The government's plans and the upcoming state budget after the election should set a new direction for the kind of economy and society we want to have once the worst of the danger has passed. What parts of the old way do we want to switch back to and which parts should we leave behind? This is an important question—and one that I have raised in here before—because the old way was simply not working for everyone. The old way was not working for the thousands of workers pushed into casual jobs and underemployment, or for the thousands of people waiting for elective surgery, or for the households that were struggling to pay their mortgage or rent that they could not afford.

On the other hand, the old way was working spectacularly well for property developers, banks and big mining companies. Corporate profits were pushing record levels, but regular Queenslanders were not getting their fair share for schools, hospitals and the jobs of the future. As we rebuild, we need to make sure that Queensland works for everyone, not just big corporations.

Over the last few months I have outlined a series of bold measures that we could adopt to fundamentally transform our society for the better. We could take this opportunity to revive Queensland manufacturing by building a publicly owned solar panel factory in Townsville and a wind turbine factory in Rockhampton to lay the foundations for a thriving renewable energy manufacturing industry in Central and North Queensland. Together those plants would be capable of manufacturing a combined 500 megawatts of wind and solar capacity per year by 2023, creating local 1,500 local jobs a year.

As demand for our metallurgical coal declines in the coming decades, we should be manufacturing steel right here in Queensland using the power of the wind and sun. Using public funds, we could build a prototype green steel manufacturing plant in Gladstone to begin production within five years. That would set the stage for a green steel industry that will create 15,000 good, secure jobs in

the long term. To do those things we propose to establish a Queensland manufacturing authority, with \$1 billion of seed funding to provide low-interest loans and grants to fund clean energy manufacturing projects in Queensland.

We could be building 100,000 public homes over the next four years to tackle the housing crisis and create 20,000 good full-time jobs every year in the construction sector. By going for 100 per cent clean, publicly and community owned energy, we could create an average of 23,000 jobs a year. That would get us 20,000 megawatts of publicly owned wind, solar and energy storage including utility batteries and pumped hydro. We could be fully funding Queensland state schools with an extra \$7 billion over four years for smaller class sizes, 6,000 more teachers and better resources. That would also mean that we could totally abolish school fees and out-of-pocket costs at public schools, because public education should be genuinely free.

The government has made a pretty sizeable allocation for the temporary health response to deal with COVID-19 but, as I am sure other members have heard, now our public hospitals are being forced to start tightening their belts to pay for all the new services. Right now, when waiting lists are surging thanks to the temporary shutdown, this is precisely the wrong time to be cutting costs. Instead of a temporary sugar hit, we could hire 6,500 more nurses and 3,000 more doctors on a permanent basis. We could build a network of 200 public health clinics with guaranteed access to a bulk-billing GP in every community to ease pressure on hospitals and make life easier for patients.

One thing sums up the contradictions of the government's plan better than anything else. Nurses, teachers, cleaners, public servants get a pay freeze; big coal mining companies get a royalties freeze—right when they should be contributing more to pay for the recovery. Queensland is a wealthy state, but Labor's decision to freeze coalmining royalties means ordinary people are going to pay to get out of this crisis. We cannot look to the LNP for an alternative. They, in fact, offered a 10-year freeze on coal royalties.

We can afford to recover from COVID-19 in a way that helps ordinary people, but we have to make a choice about who will pay. Over the last 10 years mining corporations have exported over \$480 billion in resources but only paid around seven per cent in royalties—all the while, banks and developers were making billions in profit.

The Greens think big corporations should pay. Here is how: increase mining royalties to raise \$55 billion over four years; we could introduce a 0.05 per cent levy—a very modest levy—on the big banks to raise \$4.6 billion over four years; and we could tax developers on land value gains from rezoning, reducing corruption and raising \$7.8 billion over four years. All of this is doable. It is just about choices.

I want to take the opportunity to again welcome the allocation of \$65 million for the construction of a new school in Brisbane's inner west—something I have been pushing for for some years now. I have written to the education minister asking for more detail about the promised community consultation and the department's current thinking on the location of this school, and I look forward to a response as soon as possible. It is clear, looking across all the primary schools in Brisbane's inner west, that the schools that are struggling the most with overcrowding in this area are Ironside State School at St Lucia, Indooroopilly State School and Toowong State School.

These are all schools that have recently had or are currently undergoing pretty major infrastructure upgrades and getting new learning spaces, but in each case these new facilities are a case of the government playing catch-up. There is essentially no capacity to expand without robbing these kids of the little play space they have left. As I have said before, Taringa—where the state sold off a former primary school site more than 20 years ago now—is the sensible location for a new school.

Finally, on this issue, it is equally important to note that the inner west also needs additional secondary school capacity. Since the Toowong College was closed in 2006 and converted to the selective entry Academy for Science, Mathematics and Technology, we have been left with a pretty significant gap in the secondary school catchments. Indooroopilly State High School and Kelvin Grove State College have enormous catchments and are similarly struggling with how they could possibly cater for the existing enormous student populations or any growth in those.

I have discussed this with the Indooroopilly State High School P&C and the community, and it is pretty clear that they do not want to see their school, as outstanding as it is, continue to grow unabated—student numbers have more than doubled in the last decade. I have made the case before, and I reiterate, that the government should consider whether this school that has been proposed can cater for prep to year 12 students and, if not, let us know what the plan is for dealing with the pressures on our secondary schools in the inner west that are coming. With that, I reiterate my support for these bills and I commend them to the House.